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# THE MODEL CHURCH

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BY  
G. C. BREWER

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following pages are intended as a practical application of the fundamental principles underlying the work and worship of the church revealed in the New Testament—an effort to set forth the characteristic features of an *efficient* church, such as the model given in the New Testament requires. That greater efficiency is needed among the churches of Christ in order to more successfully prosecute the work committed to them by the Master will not be called in question by any thoughtful person. The eldership, deaconship, and general management of the Lord's business in many congregations is very much below par; and the author of this book has endeavored to point out the trouble, while at the same time suggesting the scriptural remedy. He does not claim for his work the merit of "perfection," as the title would seem to indicate, but merely suggestive and helpful thoughts upon the subjects treated, knowing full well that all human works are subject to criticism and improvement. The author's position on the "manner" in which elders should be set apart is the same as held by many able brethren, and at the same time rejected by others equally as able. To my mind, it is one of those questions about which a man should hesitate to be dogmatic; and if I understand the author, he has endeavored to occupy a

conservative ground on the subject. Some may think he assigns too much authority to the eldership; but a careful reading of his book will, I think, dispel that impression.

The book contains so much that is good, suggestive, and helpful in a large degree that I could wish for it a wide circulation among the churches. The author has given much study to the topics discussed, and he deals with them in a straightforward and forceful way, never leaving you to guess at what he means. May the book be productive of much good, is my sincere and earnest desire.

F. W. SMITH.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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**T**HIS series of lessons has been prepared as an aid to those who wish to see the congregations of Christians everywhere developed according to the New Testament order. Many church members are in no sense "disciples"—learners—in the school of Christ, and often those who go off after the ways of the world do so because they have never been instructed in the way of the Lord. The people sometimes regard the preachers and elders as "cranks," and what they insist upon as simply their own bigoted notions; and if such people remain loyal, they do so as a matter of convenience, and not from conviction. It is no unusual thing to hear some members in the best congregations prate against the "cranky," "foggy," "ignorant," "backwoods" way of their leaders. Many who do this would not do it if they realized that these leaders are trying conscientiously to please the Lord and striving jealously to maintain his order.

There was once a day when the disciples knew the Bible, and any member of the church would detect the slightest digression from the Scriptures in doctrine or methods; but that day has passed, and we need now to teach again the "first principles of the oracles of God."

Any one who has observed the management of the affairs of a congregation will readily appre-

ciate the need of such lessons as are here given. Those who read the query department of the religious papers know how frequently these questions come up among the churches. These lessons have been prepared for use by those who see the situation as it is, who feel the distress of it, and who are seeking a remedy for it.

These lessons are put in a form for use as a textbook for classes, and it is hoped that whole churches will study them together. All the members must be trained along these lines if any church would become a "model church." This work will supply a ten-weeks' course of study. Competent teachers or leaders should have charge of the classes, and the work should be undertaken in all earnestness. Drills, reviews, and examinations should be held, and no class should suspend work till these lessons are thoroughly learned. All Scripture references should be read, and the more important ones should be committed to memory.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to many men and many books. He claims nothing new for this work except the arrangement. May it be used of the Lord to the glory of his name and to the joy of his people everywhere.

G. C. BREWER.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### What Constitutes a Congregation.

---

**THE CHURCH**    The church of Christ, in its uni-  
**GENERAL.**        versal sense, includes all Chris-  
                          tians. It is the family of God;  
and, of course, it contains all of God's children.  
There is no such thing known to the Bible as first  
becoming a Christian and afterwards joining the  
church. Some men of the present time may teach  
that sort of doctrine, but it has come as a result  
of the many religious parties and denominations  
which now exist, but which are all also unknown  
to the Bible. Certainly one may become a Chris-  
tian before one joins any particular religious  
party, and one may live a Christian and never  
join any religious party or denomination; but  
when one becomes a Christian, one then and  
thereby becomes a child of God, a member of the  
family of God, which is the same as the church of  
God.

Religious people of to-day frequently have union  
meetings, in which they convert people, make  
Christians of them (they claim), and then urge  
them to "join some church"—to "join the church  
of your [their] choice." But we never read of  
anything like that in the Bible. In the days of  
the apostles people obeyed the gospel, and that



added them to the church. It is said that the Lord added them to the church, because that is the Lord's way of making church members. (Acts 2: 37-47.) They did not join some denomination or have some preacher add them to his communion according to his rules of receiving members—the rules of his creed. It would be interesting to hear some denominational preacher tell what church the Ethiopian officer became a member of when he obeyed the gospel under the preaching of Philip. (Acts 8.) In the same chapter we read that Philip went down to Samaria and preached the gospel, and verse 12 says: "But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." There is nothing said about these people joining the church; that expression is never found in the Bible; but are we to suppose that they were not members of the church?

Paul went to Corinth to preach the gospel, and we read that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." (Acts 18: 8.) Did that constitute them members of the church? If so, what church? If that made them members of the church of God, then, without doubt, we have learned how we may become members of God's church to-day. That they did become members of the church of God is clearly proved by the fact that Paul wrote them a letter and addressed it to "the church of God which is at Corinth." Those who at Corinth heard, believed,



and were baptized constituted the church of God at Corinth. If people will now hear the gospel, believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they will then be children of God, Christians, members of the church of God; and there is no need for them to join any human organization, with a human head and a human creed, in order to live the Christian life. They can and they should do all the Lord commands them to do in the name of the Lord, and not in the name of some human society; as Christians, and not as Campbellites, as Methodists, as Baptists, or as Presbyterians.

But some one may say that there must be some system, some organization, or some understanding before the Lord's work can be done. That is exactly true, and it is the purpose of the following chapters to point out the system that God has ordained. Because the church of the New Testament is not a great ecclesiasticism, with a human head and man-made methods, no one should suppose that there is not, therefore, any organization or any system about the Lord's work. The Lord's plans are perfect; and if his pattern is followed, the Lord's children will live in harmony and their work will be done regularly, systematically, and enthusiastically. You are invited, therefore, to a careful study of the Lord's plans.

THE CHURCH  
LOCAL.

Those who have obeyed the gospel as described above constitute the church of God in any locality. But the Lord has ordained that they should unite their efforts or band themselves together in order to carry out his appointments and to be mutually helpful one to another; and thus they become an organization, which we usually designate as a congregation. The word "congregation" has about the same meaning as the word "church," but we more often use the latter word in its universal sense—the "church," including all Christians; hence, all congregations or local churches. The Greek word for "church" is *ecclesia* and means "assembly." The word "congregation" is from the two Latin words *con* and *grex*. *Con* means "together" and *grex* means "a flock." Hence, a congregation means a flock together or a flock assembled. To take the word literally, therefore, Christians compose a congregation only when they are congregated or assembled. But we use the word to mean those in a town or community who meet together for worship at a stated place and at appointed times. But the place of worship must be prepared and maintained and the time must be agreed on. This, if there were nothing else, would necessitate some sort of organization; but there are many other and far more important things to be done, and the Lord has ordained that every congregation shall be an organization with divinely appointed officers. There is no organiza-

tion in the church of God larger than the local church, and every church is independent of every other church and has its own bishops and deacons. No church is, therefore, a model church, does not fill the divine measure, till it has appointed men, who are scripturally qualified, as bishops or elders or overseers or pastors. (All these terms designate the same office.) There may be—yes, there are—many congregations that do not have men who meet the requirements of an elder, and in a case of that kind it is better to remain scripturally unorganized (because not full grown) than to become unscripturally organized. In a band of conscientious and zealous Christians men should soon grow to the divine pattern laid for an elder. The duty of developing elders will be considered in another chapter.

But some one may protest that it is not necessary to have bishops in every congregation. In reply it would only be necessary to say that if every congregation is not to have bishops there should be no bishops at all, for it is certain that the bishops of one congregation have no authority to oversee the affairs of another congregation. They have authority in only the one congregation. All the ecclesiasticisms and hierarchies of the present day have come as a direct result of a failure to observe that principle—the principle of congregational independence. If there are to be no elders or bishops at all, what would constitute a congregation, and in what sense would it be an



organization? How could order be maintained or discipline be enforced?

Nothing is more plainly taught than that the New Testament churches all had elders over them. The mother church at Jerusalem had in it the twelve apostles, but it also had elders—not the apostles as elders, but we read of the apostles and elders. “The apostles and the elders were gathered together.” (Acts 15: 6.) “Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church.” (Acts 15: 22.) The letter to the Gentiles began: “The apostles and the elders, brethren,” to those in Antioch, etc. (Acts 15: 23.) Paul, who had great anxiety for all the churches and who returned to them again and again to see how they fared, “appointed for them elders in *every* church.” (Acts 14: 23.) The Holy Spirit, probably through Paul, had made certain men elders in the church at Ephesus. (Acts 20: 28.) It is evident, too, that the church at Thessalonica had elders, for Paul exhorts that church to esteem highly its elders—those who “are over you in the Lord.” (1 Thess. 5: 12.) The church at Philippi is often called “a model church,” and it is certain that it had both bishops and deacons, for Paul addresses them as follows: “Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” (Phil. 1: 1.) If there is any further need of proof, it is supplied by Paul’s charge to Titus. To him he said: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou

shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge." (Tit. 1: 5.) Paul also gave Timothy full instructions as to what sort of men to appoint as elders, which shows clearly that to set things in order—to perfect each organization—and to appoint elders in each congregation was also a part of Timothy's charge.

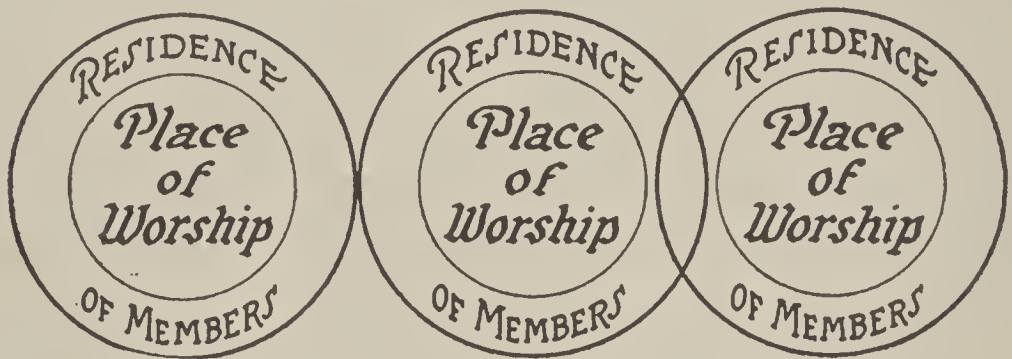
From the instructions given to the churches of Galatia and Corinth we learn that each church had a common fund or treasury into which they put their contributions each Lord's day—contributing as the Lord had prospered them; and this shows the necessity of having some one to have charge of the funds and to look after the disbursements.

In the face of all this plain teaching of the New Testament, can any one deny that all scriptural congregations are organized—each one an independent organization, with divinely appointed officers?

It is now in order to consider the MEMBERSHIP. question of membership in a congregation. Since God has ordained that certain men should be overseers, it is inevitable that there should be others over whom this oversight is exercised. And these persons must submit to this oversight and in some way make known their willingness to be under the rule, discipline, and watch care of the elders; otherwise there could be no elders, and hence no divine organization. When a Christian severs his

connection with one congregation—goes from under the oversight of one set of elders—he must, if he wishes to respect the Lord's order, unite himself with the congregation where he goes—publicly make known his willingness to be under that eldership. Much teaching is needed on this point.

The condition in some cities, and even in some rural districts, can be illustrated by two circles:



Let the inner circle represent the place of worship and the outer circle the geographical boundary of the church—that is, the members live within that radius of the place of meeting. Frequently the outer circles meet and sometimes they overlap; and when that condition exists, we often witness the sad spectacle of Christians drifting around from one place of worship to another and not claiming to be members of any local organization or church. Such persons are clearly out of harmony with the will of God and are hindering his cause.

Again, there can occasionally be found a brother, who is neither as wise as a serpent nor



as harmless as a dove, but who is rather more hobbyistic than holy, who will prate against keeping a church roll and against "putting in membership" or "taking membership" with a congregation. But men of that kind would thwart the divine arrangement and defeat the plan of God. How can the elder have charge of persons to watch concerning their souls without knowing who is thus committed to him? And how can he exercise the divine function of oversight, rule, control, etc., unless the persons submit themselves to him? Just such objections as we are here considering have resulted in the disorganized condition of the churches all over the country. They have nullified the work of elders and have robbed the church of the living God of its power in every place where their influence is felt. People hear the gospel and are converted to Christ; but the church, which should offer them a home and spiritual food, recognizes them just long enough to count them and report a "big meeting," and then goes on splitting hairs, wrangling, and riding hobbies, and these babes in Christ straightway go back into the world. Not only is this too frequently the case, but it is also a fact susceptible of demonstration that a large per cent of our own children are growing up and either joining some denomination or remaining unbelievers. This condition must not be allowed to continue. If Christianity is not strong enough to impress itself upon one who has been under its influence from infancy through all the years of adolescence—the formative period of life—how will it

ever overcome its bitter antagonists? How can we say, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," if our faith doesn't even overcome those nearest to us? Is the fault in the principle of the religion, or is it in our lives? Is the fault in *the faith* or in our faith—rather, our lack of faith? These questions get close to the secrets of our lives, and we should all give them careful and conscientious consideration. Too frequently we find people whose faith seems to be in some doctrine, theory, or hobby, and not in Christ. Their efforts are prompted by partisan zeal, and their only exertions in the name of religion are when some opponent attacks what "we" believe; then they will rush with might and main, muscle and money, to the defense of "*our doctrine.*" They love "our doctrine," but they manifest but little love for the millions of souls that are perishing at home and abroad for the want of the gospel of our blessed Lord. They can argue eloquently that only those who hear the sayings of Christ and *do* them can be saved; they can prove by numerous passages of scripture that one who refuses to be baptized has not *done* the will of Christ—is a rebel against his authority and command; but they seem to be utterly unable to see that if they fail to contribute of their means as the Lord has prospered them, if they fail to regard the Lord's appointed order in the congregation, if they do not read the Scriptures, pray, repent, and confess their sins, forgive one another, love one another, and bear one another's bur-

dens, they are also not doing the Lord's will—they also are rebels. The worst and saddest of all is that they are self-deceived. They think they are Christians. There are not many of that type, however; and it is hoped that they will become fewer and fewer.

Every congregation organized after the New Testament order should be a missionary society and every member a campaigner for Christ. Forsaking not "their own assembling," but "exhorting each other daily," they labor together in mutual helpfulness; and when one member suffers, all the members suffer with him; and when a member moves out of the town or community, he departs with the blessings of the church and with letters to commend him to the brethren wherever he may go. Then they will receive him readily and give him the encouragement and spiritual help that he needs and must have in order to be faithful.

Under our present slipshod way of doing things, any sort of schismatic or hobbyist may tear up a church and then go to another and be received and get in his evil work there before he is known; or even one who has been withdrawn from by a congregation for unchristian conduct, incest, or immorality may go to another congregation and be received. We are a long way from the New Testament.

In a scriptural congregation, if a member leaves without formally severing his connection with the congregation by asking for a letter, the



faithful elders will soon miss him and find out where he has gone, and then communicate with the elders of his nearest congregation concerning him. Yes, and they will communicate with the brother himself, for they watch concerning his soul. So perfect is the Lord's arrangements.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What is the church of God?
2. Can one be a Christian and not belong to the church?
3. How does one become a church member?
4. What is a congregation?
5. What are the officers of a congregation?
6. Should every Christian be a member of some congregation?
7. How does one become a member of a congregation? Answer: By stating his willingness to work with the congregation and to be under its elders. This is all that is necessary where the person is known. If he is a stranger, he should have a letter or some other evidence of his faithfulness.
8. Is it possible to carry on the Lord's work properly without organization? Can you have discipline without it?
9. What is some of the work of a congregation?

NOTE.—Do not confuse the duties and responsibilities of the congregation, as such, with the duties and privileges of an individual. If the individual, for instance, puts into the treasury each Lord's day *as he is prospered*, he is not likely to have money to give to other benevolent purposes;

but if he wishes to make a sacrifice in order to do that, he has that privilege.

10. What are the officers of a scriptural congregation?
11. How many elders should each congregation have?

NOTE.—A plurality. The number should be determined by the size and needs of the congregation, and also by the number of men it has who are qualified for the place. Very few churches will ever have too many.

12. Over how many churches should one set or board of elders preside?
13. What is meant by church autonomy or congregational independence?

14. What is the difference between the elders and bishops of the New Testament churches and the elders and bishops of the Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church?  
Answer: In the New Testament church a *plurality* of elders presided over *one* church; but the Methodist *elder* presides over a plurality of churches, and then the bishop presides over him; whereas in the New Testament an elder and bishop are the same—two terms for one man. The Episcopal bishop, *one man*, also presides over a whole diocese.

## CHAPTER II.

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### The Qualifications of an Elder.

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It was shown in the preceding chapter that there were elders in every congregation in the apostolic times, and that it is essential in any well-ordered congregation to-day that elders be appointed and duly recognized. Since, then, no congregation is like the New Testament pattern and cannot do the work of the Lord without being thus organized, it is necessary that all Christians be well instructed on all questions pertaining to the organization. What are the qualifications of an elder? How is an elder made? What are the duties of a congregation to her elders? All of these questions are exceedingly important, because if we do not know the teaching of the Lord on these points we can never be what the Lord wants us to be or do what the Lord wants us to do. Again, these questions are important because of a woeful lack of information on these points among church members.

The reader is not unaware, perhaps, that there is some controversy on these questions. But, as in some other cases, the controversy, instead of clearing up the matter, has to some extent complicated it and obscured some plain truths. Brethren have talked and argued so much about how



things ought to be done and criticized each other to such an extent that there are some good Christians who, not wishing to take sides in a controversy, have given the question no consideration whatever. They have regarded it as something to be let alone. This has been the attitude of many young preachers. They have shunned the question for fear they would start a controversy or cause factions among some of the churches. But these are scriptural questions, and they vitally concern us; and we cannot, therefore, afford to be ignorant of them. No teacher of God's word is faithful to his trust if he shuns to declare all that God teaches on these and all other questions. Sometimes we hesitate to present what the New Testament teaches relative to the elders and their duties and qualifications because we find our practices clearly out of harmony with it in many instances. This, however, is unworthy of any honest, God-fearing seeker after truth. When the scriptural qualifications of an elder are presented, if any brother who is recognized as an elder finds himself deficient in any of them, let him begin at once to develop the needed grace or condition. If for any reason he finds that it will be impossible for him soon to measure up to the divine standard, let him refuse to be recognized as holding this responsible position among Christians. If he is too sensitive to have his deficiencies pointed out, or if, seeing them, he refuses to get out of the way, *that alone* is certain and sufficient evidence that he is not fit for the place and

should be told by the congregation to retire. He should not be allowed to blockade the Lord's work. This painful experience will never be necessary if the Scriptures are followed in selecting and appointing elders. Let every Christian, therefore, learn what the New Testament teaches. Let him forget that there was ever a disputed point in this whole subject, and let him study just as if what the Lord says had just recently been spoken to him by the Lord and had never been heard or read by a human being before.

Since some (both) of the qualifications and of the duties of the elders are seen in the words that designate them, it is probably as appropriate to give those words with definitions here as in the chapter on duties. No one can be well informed on the important questions we are studying unless he makes a careful study of these words. For instance, it is sometimes said that an elder is not an officer in the church, and that the place he holds is not to be considered an office. But it will be seen that the word *presbuteros*, which is universally translated "elder," had that signification both among the Hebrews and the Greeks. Elders were common among the Jews. Every synagogue had its bench of elders. They gave counsel and advice, decided questions, and presided over the people. That they were looked upon as holding an office, and not simply as old or elderly men, may be seen from the following: "And Jehovah said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou

knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them.” (Num. 11: 16.) The Hebrew word for “elders” in this passage is *zawkane*, and in the Septuagint the word is *presbuteroi*, which is always “elders” in the English text. Another passage which shows that the word designates an officer is Luke 22: 66. It reads: “And as soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away into their council.” Here Luke seems to use the word to embrace the whole Jewish court, council, or Sanhedrin. It is true that the expression, “office of a bishop,” in 1 Tim. 3: 1 is from a single Greek word; and some have contended, therefore, that the word “office” should be eliminated. But the man who objects to the expression as conveying the wrong meaning would have difficulty in translating the sentence so as to omit the objectionable idea. And it devolves upon him to do that very thing. If he objects to the rendering of our standard translations, he is under obligation to give us a better rendering. But can he do it? He might easily omit the word “office,” but he cannot properly translate the sentence without retaining the same idea. The Greek word is *episcopos*, the noun in the genitive case, showing that it is something belonging to the bishop, something of the bishop; hence, most naturally, “*office of a bishop*.” The noun must be so translated as to show its genitive or possessive nature and at the same time to supply an object for the verb. “If



a man *desire* the ————— of a bishop, he desireth a good work." Let the reader supply the word—fill in the blank. This noun occurs only four times in the New Testament. It is twice translated "visitation" (Luke 19: 44; 1 Pet. 2: 12), and once "bishopric" (Acts 1: 20, A. V.) or "*office*" (R. V.), and once "office of a bishop" (1 Tim. 3: 1). It is plain that it could not be translated "visitation" in the passage in Timothy. It could be translated "bishopric" or "overseership," but that would not change the idea or better express the meaning. The eldership is an office, and there is too much evidence to prove it for any one to deny it if he will consider evidence. *Presbuteros* itself is a term of rank or office. However unscriptural the hierarchies of present-day religious denominations may be, they certainly are unscriptural and even antiscritptural; and however much we may emphasize the blessed doctrine of humility and equality among Christians, it is, nevertheless, a fact that we must not deny that the New Testament churches had men in them holding the office of a bishop—the bishopric or overseership—into which they were inducted by some form of appointment or ordination. And that there was some honor to being thus recognized is shown by the expression, "if a man desire the office of a bishop." This implies that it was something to be aspired to and desired. Again, the precaution against appointing a novice, lest he become inflated with the honor, further illustrates the same point. If we

can give people the proper conception of this noble and honorable work, there will be men to-day who will "desire the office of a bishop," and they will prepare themselves for it.

It should be observed that there are several different words in the New Testament that designate an elder. The words are not synonymous, but they very evidently refer to the same person, each one representing some particular phase of his office, work, or duty. These words in English are "bishop," "elder," "presbyter," "pastor" or "shepherd," "overseer," and "ruler" ("those who rule"—Rom. 12: 8).

Let us now learn the meaning of these words, for in them we have many of the duties and qualifications of those who are to do the work of a bishop. These words and their definitions are here presented in a form that can be used as a chart if any class so desires to use them. On the left of the brace is the Greek word, first in Greek then spelled out in English. Beneath these is the English word by which the Greek word is or may be translated and the reference in which the word is found. On the right of the brace the definitions are given in full from Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. By this method it is hoped that the youngest Bible student may be able to appreciate the lesson from these words.

ἐπίσκοπος  
*episcopos*  
 bishop, overseer  
 (Acts 20: 28; Tit.  
 1: 7; 1 Tim. 4:  
 1; Phil. 1: 1.)

An overseer—a man charged with the duty of seeing that things done by others are done rightly; any curator, guardian, or superintendent; in the New Testament, a guardian of souls, one who watches over their welfare; the superintendent, head, or overseer of any Christian church.

πρεσβύτερος  
*presbuteros*  
 presbyter, elder  
 (Acts 14: 23; 1  
 Tim. 5: 1, 17;  
 Tit. 1: 5; 1  
 Pet. 5: 1.)

1. Of age—(a) the elder of two; (b) advanced in life—an elder, a senior.

2. A term of rank or office; (a) among the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin; (b) those who preside over the assemblies (or churches). That they did not differ from the (*episcopos*) bishops or overseers is evident from the fact that the two words are used indiscriminately. (Acts 20: 17, 28; Tit. 1: 5, 7.) The title *episcopos* denotes the function; *presbuteros*, the dignity. The former was borrowed from Greek institutions; the latter, from the Jewish.

ποιμήν  
*poimeen*  
 pastor, shepherd  
 (1 Pet. 2: 25; 5:  
 2; Eph. 4: 11.)

A herdsman, especially a shepherd; (a) in the parable, he to whose care and control others have committed themselves and whose precepts they follow (John 10: 11, 14); (b) metaph, the presiding officer, manager, director of any assembly. So of Christ (1 Pet. 2: 25); so of overseers of Christian churches (Eph. 4: 11).

προιστάμενος  
*proistamenos*  
 to rule. (Rom.  
 12: 8.)  
 “are over you.”  
 (1 Thess. 5:  
 12.)  
 “rule well.” (1  
 Tim. 5: 17.)  
 ruler, president

1. To set or place before, to set over.  
 2. (a) To be over, superintend; to preside over (1 Tim. 5: 17); with the genitive of the person or thing over which one presides (1 Thess. 5: 12; 1 Tim. 3: 4); (b) to be a protector or guardian; to give aid (Rom. 12: 8, to rule).



<p>ἡγούμενοι  <i>hegoumenoi</i>          to lead, to rule          (Heb. 13: 7, 17,          24.)</p>	{	<p>1. To lead—i. e., (a) to go before;          (b) to be a leader; to rule, com-          mand; to have authority over; lead-          ing as respects influence, controlling          in counsel; so of the overseers or lead-          ers of the Christian churches (Heb.          13: 7, 17, 24).</p>
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As it is the duty of a bishop to care for, watch over, rule over, and lead a congregation of Christians, it is certainly no matter of surprise that the Lord has been very minute in telling us just the kind of men to place in this position. It is a hazardous business to ignore or to make void any of God's arrangements. Because men have been honored with the office of a bishop who were unworthy of it, many churches have come lightly to regard the Lord's appointed. Even in some places the elders (so called) are treated with contempt by some members of their flock. This is bringing God's order down very low indeed. Either the man should cease to be recognized as an elder or he should be treated with the respect and deference due an elder.

But the qualifications of a bishop are many, and are such that no man can possess them and not be a power for good wherever he is. No man can possess all these qualities and not be respected and loved by his fellow men, whether he has ever been appointed to the overseership or not. Christians will naturally seek counsel and instruction from such a man. He inspires confidence and elicits the best there is in one. Let us remove the cause of trouble, then, by appointing men who

meet the divine requirements. The qualifications mentioned in the third chapter of the First Epistle to Timothy and the first chapter of the letter to Titus are here given in a tabulated form in the hope that they will be duly impressed upon the minds of the readers. These are quoted from the American Revised Version.

## TIMOTHY.

1. Without reproach.
2. Husband of one wife.
3. Temperate.
4. Sober-minded.
5. Orderly.
6. Given to hospitality.
7. Apt to teach.
8. No brawler.
9. No striker.
10. Gentle.
11. Not contentious.
12. No lover of money.
13. Rules well his own house.
14. Not a novice.
15. Good testimony from without.

## TITUS.

1. Blameless.
2. Husband of one wife.
3. Having children that believe.
4. Not self-willed.
5. Not soon angry.
6. No brawler.
7. No striker.
8. Not greedy of filthy lucre.
9. Given to hospitality.
10. Lover of good.
11. Sober-minded.
12. Just.
13. Holy.
14. Self-controlled.
15. Sound in the faith.

The first and the second are the same in both Timothy and Titus; the third in Titus is the thirteenth in Timothy; the fifth in Titus seems to correspond with the tenth in Timothy; the sixth and the seventh in Titus are the same as the eighth and ninth in Timothy; the eighth in Titus is the twelfth in Timothy; the ninth in Titus is the sixth in Timothy; the eleventh and the fourth are the same; and the fourteenth in Titus is the third in Timothy. But this leaves five in Titus that are not mentioned in Timothy—namely,

numbers four, ten, twelve, thirteen, and fifteen. And since they both have an equal number, this, of course, leaves five in Timothy that are not mentioned in Titus. They are numbers five, seven, eleven, fourteen, and fifteen. This, then, gives twenty qualifications that every bishop must possess. But it is claimed by some men that it is not necessary for each elder to possess every one of the qualifications, but that enough men, each one possessing some of the qualifications that another does not possess, be appointed to have all the qualifications in the eldership of each church. This, however, is very obviously wrong. What requirement is it that any elder can afford to be deficient in? Can one be a lover of money provided the others are not? Can one be a brawler if some of the others are not brawlers? Can one be contentious provided the others are not contentious? Can one be unholy, unjust, intemperate, self-willed, soon angry, disorderly, or unmannerly, provided his fellow elders in the same church are the reverse? Considered in this way, the contention appears to be absurd. It was devised, no doubt, to justify some man who had been appointed to the overseership, but who was manifestly not *apt to teach*. It is no unusual thing these times to find a man professing to serve in the capacity of an elder who cannot lead a public prayer, much less offer words of instruction to the congregation. Yet he has been appointed by the Holy Spirit (?) to *feed* the flock! This is a travesty on the divine order.



If these requirements appear to be rigid, just take time to consider them and see which one *any* Christian should not possess. Aside from the fact that an elder is not to be a novice—new convert—there is not a thing required in his character that is not also required of every Christian to some degree. The elder is supposed to have these things developed in his life to a greater degree than the average Christian, because he is older as a Christian than many (not a novice) and because he has (should have) “desired,” *stretched forward to*, or prepared himself for the office of a bishop. Every Christian is to be a teacher (Heb. 5: 12; Tit. 2: 3, 4; Matt. 28: 18-20); but a bishop is to be *apt to teach*, gifted as a teacher, capable to teach, qualified to give instruction, and so familiar with the Scriptures that he can convict the gainsayers and put them to silence. He must by sound teaching be able both to exhort and convince. (Tit. 1: 9-11.)

In saying that all the qualifications are to be possessed by all Christian men in some degree, it is assumed that the expression, “the husband of one wife,” means the husband of but one wife. If a man insists that this requires an elder to be a married man, he would also have to insist that the third qualification mentioned in Titus requires an elder to have children; not only that, but his children must be old enough to be believers. If they are old enough and are not believers, the man is disqualified. It seems that that is an extreme view, but it would be best to have men



who are heads of families as elders if they can be had and if they possess the other qualifications. And if a man had children who are grown and are not Christians, it would be well to consider whether or not he is not lacking in some of the qualifications of an elder; for it would seem strange that a man measuring up to this high standard of Christian conduct could have the training of a child from its birth and fail to make a Christian of it. Would he be capable of caring for and training the babes in Christ, or would they, too, go astray under his influence and guidance?

It should not be thought that the word "blameless" means "sinless" or "faultless." No man is faultless. It means that the man should be irreproachable, unblameworthy in any manner of conduct. He is not "blamed" or charged with any misdealing by his fellow men, but is recognized by all as an honest, honorable, upright Christian gentleman.

Each student should get a Bible dictionary and a good commentary, and, with these aids, study carefully every one of the twenty qualifications of an elder.

Every congregation that has existed for any number of years should have men in it who possess these qualifications and should be training others for the work of a bishop.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. How many words are used in the New Testament to designate an elder?
2. Name these words.
3. Is there any difference in an elder and a bishop? An elder and a pastor?
4. Is the eldership an *office* in the church? If not, what does the appointing, ordination, or consecration do for him?
5. How many qualifications of an elder does Paul mention in Timothy and Titus?
6. Name them.
7. Does *each* elder in every church have to possess all of these?

NOTE.—Besides these qualifications, every elder should possess natural characteristics of sense, judgment, tact, ability to lead, etc. A man may be in every sense a good man and still not have sufficient force or strength of personality to impress his goodness upon others. If a man “rules well his own house,” it is pretty fair evidence that he has some ability to lead and govern.

8. What does “apt to teach” mean?
9. What does “orderly” mean?
10. What does “blameless” mean?
11. Should a man be appointed to the eldership who does not possess the qualifications?
12. Where a church does not have “material” for elders, what should it do?

NOTE.—If you cannot agree as to the meaning of all the qualifications, such as “the husband of one wife,” take a safe course and do not argue and contend. Strife is deadly; it kills. Contentions are a devil’s stew pot, a witch’s cauldron.

## CHAPTER III.

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### The Duties of the Elders.

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In this chapter we shall endeavor to set forth just what the Scriptures show to be the work of elders, with little effort to elaborate or illustrate. Every reader who has had any experience in Christian service or who has with any care observed the condition and working of the church will be able to call to mind examples of the disastrous results of not having these duties performed, either because there were no elders or the so-called "elders" were negligent and incompetent. As some of the duties of the elders were shown in the preceding chapter, because they were contained in the terms that designate the elders, so also will some of the lessons of the next chapter be implied in this. It would be impossible to present the elders' relation to their flock without showing by implication at least a part of the flock's relation to the elders. But these lessons are so very important that they cannot be stressed too much. A proper understanding and *application* of these lessons on the organization of the congregation will revolutionize the majority of our congregations everywhere. Therefore let us make an honest and a prayerful effort to learn fully what God declares to be the work of the elders.



We could not begin the effort in a better way than by quoting two matchless passages on this subject from the two greatest apostles—Paul and Peter. To the elders of Ephesus, Paul said: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20: 28.) To *your* elders, or the elders that are among you, Peter said: “The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellow elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind: neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock.” (1 Pet. 5: 1-3.)

Before studying the duties here laid upon the elders, let us notice particularly Peter’s negative injunctions. Whatever the elders do must be done:

1. “*Not of constraint*,” or by compulsion, hence reluctantly, but with a willing mind; anxious to serve, willing to suffer, and ready always to do the will of the Lord.

2. “*Nor yet for filthy lucre*”—not as a means of livelihood. This shows that the elders in the New Testament times were paid by their flocks for their work or were supported while they did the work. But they



were strictly forbidden to do the work with a view to the pay. Elders, preachers, or any others who do any part of the Lord's work for money are unworthy.

3. "Neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you." Some have inferred that the elders in this passage were simply the elderly men of the church, because the apostle in the same connection gives an exhortation to the "younger;" but that these elders were the bishops—those who held the office of a bishop—is shown by the fact that they had a "charge allotted to them" and that they were not to do their work for "filthy lucre." Also what is here commanded of these elders is exactly what other scriptures state as the duties of bishops. The word "younger" means "inferior" (Luke 22: 26), and here evidently refers to those subject to the elders—those "*allotted*" to them.

Much harm comes from a lack of judgment in applying scripture, and more often from a lack of *sincerity*; for surely our judgment would not be so faulty if our desires were right. If a church member is obstreperous, or if a whole church sets out to do something that is not right, when the elders object or protest, they are sure to be told that they are not to "*lord it*" over the church; and thus those bent on evil will force that expression to license them to ignore the elders and even impeach them. On the other hand, if an elder

lacks enough of the divinely required qualifications to be arbitrary and tyrannical, he may take those passages that contain the word "rule" and put a forced construction upon them. But one whose desire is to do the will of God will have no trouble with either of the scriptures. His ideas, whims, and preferences are secondary, and he first seeks to know what the Lord wishes instead of trying to force the Lord to say what he wishes. The elders are to be over the church, have the oversight; but they are not to act as feudal lords and treat their brethren as servile servants. They are not to be arbitrary, tyrannical, or unduly dictatorial. All their work is to be done not for their own glory or gratification, but for the good of those allotted to them. They are the servants of the servants of the Lord.

Analyzing the above quotations from Paul and Peter, we learn several of the duties that belong to the elders. Paul admonishes them to—

1. *"Take heed to yourselves."* In serving God, self always comes first in this very important sense. He who would save a man from drowning must have a firm footing himself; he who would pluck the mote from his brother's eye must see that there is no beam in his own eye. Before we condemn others, we must examine ourselves to see whether we are in the faith. (2 Cor. 13: 5.) He who would be a faithful workman must first give diligence to present himself approved unto God (2 Tim. 2: 15); he who would save souls must give heed first to himself and then to his

teaching, for in so doing he will save himself and those who hear him (1 Tim. 4: 16). The elders are to be examples for their flocks, and no man can live an exemplary life without taking heed to himself. He must watch his words, his deeds, and his thoughts. He must study the word of God and try earnestly and prayerfully to be what God says an elder must be. How necessary that he who is to take heed to the flock must first take heed to himself!

2. "*To feed the church of God.*" Of all the work that is given to the elders, nothing is more important than this, and nothing is more sadly and shamefully neglected in our day than this often-commanded duty. We cannot live physically without food; neither can we live spiritually without spiritual food. God has provided the food for us, and has ordained that each congregation have qualified men appointed to dispense this food. That is why God has particularly required every bishop to be *apt to teach*. If a congregation goes wrong for the want of proper instruction, the elders are at fault. But this does not mean the elders are to confine their teaching to certain doctrines, such as faith, repentance, baptism, the sin of using an organ in the worship, etc.; but they must strive to teach all God teaches, teach their flocks to observe all that God commands. Their teaching should not consist entirely in criticisms of the methods of others; should not be altogether negative and destructive. They should have a positive message, and should



impress the brethren that they stand for something; that they have something to do and must be about their Father's business if they would be saved. Their teaching must be constructive; it must build up Christian characters. It is not necessary that the elders do all the teaching that is done, but all that is done must be done under their supervision and with their approval. If there is a Sunday-school class or other Bible classes taught in the church, the elders must oversee the work and know that it is done properly. They should visit the classes or in some other way keep informed as to what they are doing. If any teacher teaches error, he should be corrected and admonished; and if he will not desist, he must be asked to give up his class. If any teacher is not regular in attendance, does not feel his responsibility, does not prepare his lessons, or in any other way shows a lack of interest, he should be either stirred up to do his work faithfully or asked to quit. How many elders do you know who show this sort of interest in the teachers and classes of the Bible schools?

There are men who do not approve this class system. They think the elders ought to do all the teaching and that all the church should be in one class! That is, they think that if *they* happen to be the elders. If they are not the elders, they are pretty certain to argue that we should not have elders in the church to-day. It hardly seems possible that such men could be found in a civilized country, but such is the case. For the honest per-



sons who may be troubled by such men let us observe :

There are different classes of individuals to be taught and different kinds of food provided for them. This is true without even considering the children who are not yet old enough to be members of the church. There are babes in Christ, and these must have milk. There are full-grown men in the faith, and these require the strong meat. (1 Cor. 2: 6; Heb. 5: 12-14; 1 Pet. 2: 1, 2.) This, of course, necessitates a separation into classes in order that the teaching be done to the best advantage. To further illustrate this necessity, we remind you that there are persons who and times when women are forbidden to teach. Yet women are by the same authority solemnly commanded to teach. (Tit. 2: 3-5.) They must be teachers of that which is good. This shows clearly that those whom the women teach must be in a class apart from those whom it is improper for women to teach publicly. Here let us be reminded that all this teaching does not have to be done in forty-five minutes on Sunday forenoon. All churches should have plenty of classrooms to accommodate all the children and the milk-and-meat classes in the church. These rooms should be well supplied with charts and maps and other conveniences for teaching. The classes may meet and study and recite any day or night of the week or as many days or nights of the week as may be convenient. Why do we not have more work like this? Is it not needed?

If the assistance of an evangelist is required by the congregation, his work, too, must come under the direction of the elders. How else could a congregation be protected against false teachers? If the elders feel the need of an evangelist, they, with the church, may employ him for two weeks, six weeks, two months, six months, a year, two years, or as long as his services are needed. He should not, however, be allowed to displace the pastors and become *the pastor*. There are examples in the New Testament of evangelists, apostles, and others who were not elders laboring with churches that had elders. The *modern pastor* system is not scriptural, and the tendency of our congregations to drift into it is to be regretted. Those brethren who are now crying against it are doing more harm than good, in that they are abusing and misrepresenting—unintentionally, of course—certain brethren who are living with the churches, but who no more wish to change the divine order than they do. Some of the preachers who are now accusing their brethren of digressing in this particular are elderly men and have been preaching many years. Yet what of the churches that they have been preaching for all these years? Are they scripturally organized? Do they have scriptural elders who are doing their work faithfully? It seems that these brethren have waited too long to begin teaching the truth on the organization of the local church. It is a sad fact that some congregations now need the constant services of some

evangelist in order *to exist*, to say nothing about doing the work that a church ought to do. They have men as elders who are not at all qualified, and it takes some outside help to keep down strife among the “elders” and between the “elders” and their flock. At least, that is known to be the deplorable condition of some few churches. Now, if an evangelist lives with a church like that for the purpose of setting things in order and of placing the church in scriptural position, he is certainly doing a good work; and the Lord help a man who undertakes it. Brethren would better spend their energies trying to improve the condition of the churches instead of wasting them abusing those who are trying to do something.

3. The third duty, as we are numbering them, is to “*tend the flock*.” The Greek word for “tend” is *poimamate*, and may be translated “shepherd”—shepherd the flock. The imagery here is very beautiful. The church is a flock; Christ is the chief shepherd, and the elders are the under-shepherds. As the shepherd feeds his flock and protects them from wolves and bears, thieves and robbers, so the elders must care for the church. They must protect it from evils without and within. They should keep out false teachers. If there is a hobbyist in the congregation, the elders should not give him any recognition as a public teacher, and should keep him from sowing discord among the brethren as far as is possible for them to prevent it. Care is needed here; “for there are many unruly men, vain talkers and de-



ceivers," even to-day. The elders should show the proper spirit in this sort of work, of course, as scriptural elders always will.

4. "*Taking the oversight*" is the fourth duty in our catalogue. The word for this expression is *episcopauntes*—one word for the whole expression. It may be translated "filling the office of a bishop," "doing the duty of a bishop," or "exercising the oversight." The one given in the Revised Version is probably the best.

We have already seen that all the teaching in the congregation is to be done under the oversight of the elders. We may now add that all other activities of the church are to be directed and supervised by the elders. They do not do all the work, by any means; but they take the oversight and see that what is done by the others is done rightly. Wise men it takes to fill this place! Well may we pray for the Lord to fulfill his words in Jeremiah: "And I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. 3: 15.)

5. *To rule well* is the fifth duty that demands our attention. It has already been observed that no elder should "lord it over the charge allotted" to him. The qualifications required by the New Testament will prevent a man who is self-willed, self-opinionated, and domineering from being appointed an elder, if the requirements are observed. It is necessary in any well-regulated family, church, or school that there be a leader, head, deciding voice. In a school the teacher is the ruler;



in a family the father is, or should be, the head; and in a congregation elders are the head. (This does not interfere with the fact that Christ is the head of the church. Christ is also the shepherd of the flock, but the elders are shepherds under him.) In a disorganized congregation any officious old sister or cranky brother holds the veto power of the church and may blockade the Lord's work entirely. This will never happen where the elders are what the Lord has ordained that they should be. They will decide what course the congregation is to pursue in any matter, and their decision will be final. Thus you see the Lord's plan, if followed, will forestall all factions, disagreements, and dissensions.

The elders should always consult together and reach an agreement among themselves on any question before it is brought before the church. Otherwise they might have the unfortunate result of a disagreement between themselves before the congregation, and that would certainly cause a disagreement among the members, for they would take sides with the different elders.

When the question for decision is one of mere preference or convenience, the elders should rule in accord with the wishes of the congregation always. If it is a question of who shall preach for the church, the members should have the man they want, if he is sound in the faith and of good report. If it is a question of the time when a meeting is to be held, the people must be consulted. If it is a question of what shall be done

with the money contributed by the congregation, the members must help decide it. They should know just what particular phase of the Lord's work it goes to help and how much to each need. They should know what missionary they help and to what extent. This is entirely right, and it is also expedient. It will give the members more interest in the work; they will feel a partnership in it; and they can, as they certainly should, pray for it. *In all cases where no principle of right or wrong is involved, the elders should have due regard for the wishes of the congregation.* The elders should rule their flocks in something like the same way that a kind, tactful, yet firm and watchful, father rules his family. If any movement is started in the congregation that is contrary to the Lord's word, the elders must stand firm for God and put down the evil.

If any one doubts that God intends that the elders are to rule in the manner here presented, let him read the following scriptures: 1 Tim. 5: 17; Heb. 13: 7, 17, 24. Let him also consult the meaning of the words that designate an elder.

6. *The elders are to watch in behalf of the souls of their flock.* (Heb. 13: 17.) They are responsible for the spiritual condition of their members, and will have to give an account to God for them. Read carefully the reference—Heb. 13: 17. The elders should, therefore, know the spiritual status of each member of the congregation. They should, by a keen watch care over them, be able to see the first indication of indifference, worldli-

ness, or backsliding. They should know whether the member is growing or whether he is deteriorating. They should know whether the babes in Christ are properly nourished, whether they are being fed, and whether they are digesting and assimilating their food.

Are we accustomed to see this kind of watchfulness on the part of the elders of our present-day churches? They rarely know how many members they have, and often they do not even know some of their members when they meet them face to face. Yet these members have been "allotted" to them as sheep to a shepherd, and they are to feed them, tend them, and watch concerning their souls! The elders, in watching on behalf of their "charge," should protect them against dangerous doctrines, false teachings, hobbies, and strifes about words as far as it is in their power to protect them.

The elders should instruct their members thoroughly, admonish them often, even in tears when there is danger of their falling, and pray with them much. This is necessary in order to keep some members from falling away. The elders will have to give an account to God for their members. Their blood is upon the elders' heads.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. How many duties of an elder can you name? Can you name any that are not discussed in this chapter? What do you think of James 5: 15-18?



2. What is it to *feed* the flock? What sort of food does the flock require?
3. Should the elders do all the teaching?
4. If they do not do the teaching, how can they know what is being taught?
5. Who should rule over the congregation?
6. How should the elders rule when the question is one of preference or convenience?
7. Who is responsible for the spiritual condition of the church?
8. How should the members be kept from back-sliding?
9. In ruling the congregation, should the elders do things without the knowledge, hence without the acquiescence, of the members?
10. Should they not rather plan and propose work and lead in it, but always secure the aid and participation of all their members?
11. Is it not their duty to develop the talent in the congregation?
12. Should they not make teachers of all the members? (Heb. 5: 12.)
13. Instead of the elders doing all the work, is it not their duty to see that all work? (Heb. 10: 24.)
14. When an elder fails to discharge these duties, should he be recognized by the congregation as one of its elders? Why should he be recognized? What entitles him to such recognition and respect? Does he claim it? If so, that shows him to be all the more unworthy.



## CHAPTER IV.

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### The Relation of the Overseen to the Overseer.

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There must always be an understanding and agreement between the elders and the congregation if their work is either pleasant or profitable. The Lord knew this, and he has made laws to govern their conduct toward each other. The Lord's laws are perfect, and his way is always best. He knew the human nature before he devised the plan of redemption, and all the laws that he has given to regulate human conduct are adapted perfectly to man's needs, frailties, and weaknesses, though not always to man's wishes. All the disorder, misunderstanding, jarrings, and frictions of earth come as the result of the infraction of some of God's laws. Where his laws are known and properly observed, there is always harmony and peace and perfection.

When man and woman lived in their Edenic home and were the companions of their Creator, there was no law given to govern their relationship further than that they should be one flesh. They needed no law then. God's order obtained, and all things were good and very good. Both woman and man filled their respective spheres as naturally as the fishes swam in the water or the birds flew in the heavens. The question of their

inferiority or superiority to each other never troubled them. It was after sin entered the home of man and wrought its ruin that God told the woman that her desire should be to her husband and he should rule over her. A failure to observe this law has made countless thousands mourn.

In the interest of the cause of Christ and for the peace and happiness of each local church, every Christian should learn what is the will of God relative to the organization of the local church. Having learned in the preceding chapters that each congregation is to have a board of elders, and having studied the duties and qualifications of elders, it is now appropriate to learn what are the duties of each church to her elders. Let us number the New Testament injunctions to the members of the congregations and take particular notice of them just as we did its instructions to the elders. The members are admonished to—

1. *Duly regard the elders.* (1 Thess. 5: 12.) “But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake.” The word which is here translated “to know” is used Hebraistically and means “to acknowledge,” “to respect,” or “duly regard.” Any Christian who ignores the elders and proceeds with any of the affairs of the church without consulting their wishes or heeding their direc-

tions is in flagrant disobedience to this passage of scripture. Any member who lightly regards their admonitions or disrespects their ruling is guilty of disobeying God.

2. *Esteem them exceeding highly in love.* This emphasizes the first admonition. They are admonished to know and to esteem the elders—not only *to esteem* them, but *to esteem* them *exceeding highly*; and not only *to esteem* them *exceeding highly*, but to esteem them *exceeding highly in love*; and all of that for their work's sake, or because of the honor of their work, because of the responsibility and dignity of their position. Also men who possess the character and scriptural knowledge and spiritual attainments that elders are required to have are worthy of the esteem, respect, and love of all men. But it should be noticed that the elders are to be esteemed highly for their work's sake, or, as stated above, because of the honor of their office. Men respect the governor of a State or the judge of a court not because his character merits deference, but because of his position or office. In the light of the above scripture, what shall we say of those church members who speak disrespectfully and even disparagingly of the elders? Let us try the Lord's way a while, brethren.

3. *Imitate their faith.* (Heb. 13: 7.) The elders are told to be examples for their flocks, and here the members are told to im-



itate them. Paul often exhorted Christians to follow him, as he followed the Lord. Every religious teacher should teach by example as well as by precept. We learn to do things best by seeing others do them. Like the village preacher, the elders should not only allure to brighter worlds, but they should also lead the way; and the congregation should be content to follow.

4. *Submit to them.* (Heb. 13: 17.) When a Christian becomes a member of a congregation, he then and thereby places himself under the oversight of the elders of that congregation. It is then his duty to submit to the elders. When they admonish him, he must hear them. If they find it necessary to reprove or even rebuke him, he must heed. If they give him work to do, he must do it, if he can. From the elders he should be willing to receive counsel, encouragement, and help. And this they will, if they are the Lord's kind, be ready and anxious to give. Sometimes a man comes into a congregation and begins at once to try to change the methods and manners of a congregation, to force the elders to submit to him, and to make the whole church over to suit himself. In some cases the change might be an improvement, but it is assuming too much authority for a man to undertake such a task uninvited and before the people know whether he is either capable or worthy of the task. All members

of the congregations, whether they are new or old, must submit to the elders.

5. *Obey the elders.* (Heb. 13: 17.) It would be impossible for the elders to rule over the church if the members would not submit to them and obey their ruling. The eldership would be mere mockery unless their authority is regarded. This is the reason many congregations do not have elders to-day—not because they do not have men who could do the work, but because they have members who love to have the preëminence and who do not have the requisites for membership in a Christian congregation. It is very convenient for such individuals to discourage any desire to appoint elders with the suggestion that there is not a man in the congregation who is qualified. Not infrequently they ignore the elders and dispose of them with a contemptuous “they-are-not-fit-for-elders” remark. If the elders allow such as that, they are truly “not fit.” The congregation must obey its elders in all that God teaches, or ask them to retire. If the elders do something that any member considers wrong, he should speak to the elders about it and ask for an explanation. Possibly they can make it clear to him, or it might be that they would see that they did make a mistake. No man is, and no set of men are, past making mistakes. All scriptural elders know that they are not infallible, and they

welcome corrections and advice and information. If any decision of the elders is found to be wrong or injudicious, they will correct it. If they do not, *they*, and not the members, are rebellious. If a man should find it impossible conscientiously to obey any ruling of the elders, there is but one course for him to pursue: withdraw his membership from the congregation. This will never be necessary unless either the member or the elders are obstinate and desire to exalt an opinion or whim of their own above the word of God and the good of the church; for if it is a matter of fidelity to God, it would be an easy matter to turn to the New Testament and determine what is right or wrong. People who will not obey the elders rebel against the will and authority of God and cannot expect his approval or blessings. God plainly says: "Obey them that have the rule over you."

6. *Count them worthy of double honor.* We have already learned from Peter's language, forbidding an elder to do his work for the sake of lucre or money, that the elders in the New Testament church were paid by the congregation for their work. That fact is brought out still clearer by Paul in this passage (1 Tim. 5: 17): "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor." The word which is translated "honor" is "*times*," and, according to the



lexicons, it means "salary," "stipend," "reward," "wages." The elders, therefore, received wages from the congregation, and those who ruled well were to have a double portion, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. Where are those brethren who used to oppose paying a preacher? Where are those who said it was wrong to give the preacher a stipend or stipulated amount? Did they never read or study this scripture? But some one may object that it is the elders that are here spoken of. Exactly; but the passage speaks *especially* of those who labor in preaching (*logos*) and teaching.

If we had any doubt about the meaning of the word "honor," the rest of the passage would show its meaning.

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in word and in teaching. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire." There can be no question as to whether the elders were supported by their flock in Paul's time; that is clear; but the question is, whether the churches should now support in a financial way the elders that rule over them. Why not? Is not this passage meant for us as much as any other part of the letter? Of course no man should do the work for a

money consideration; and where a congregation is not able to thus reward its bishops, of course no faithful man would on that account refuse to do the work. Or if any faithful elder—or preacher, either—wishes to support himself and not be burdensome to the church, he has a fine example to follow. That was Paul's course, as we all know. He reminded the Ephesian elders of his course and told them to do likewise. (Acts 20: 35.)

Where the church is not so large but that the elders can meet all its demands—do their whole duty—and at the same time work for their support, there is no need for the church to support them; but in the towns and cities where the congregation is large and of a cosmopolitan membership, many weak members, a number of babes in Christ, and these completely surrounded by multifarious temptations and every influence but Christian, *somebody must tend* that flock; and whoever does it will have need to be everywhere at once and to be somewhere all the time. And yet he must have time for study, meditation, and prayer. If he looks after the sick, the dying, the destitute, the funerals, etc., and then prepares to teach (feed) the flock when it assembles for worship, what time will he have to watch concerning their souls, to get personally acquainted with his members and know their wants and needs? What man can make a living for

himself and family and then do all this work for the church? Either task will keep a man busy night and day in our times. Every city church of any size ought to support at least two or three pastors (elders), if it cannot support all its elders, while they do their work; for they will all be kept busy if they do the work the Bible requires and the exigency demands.

Those brethren who oppose a "pastor" should begin to teach the churches the necessity of supporting their elders so they can do the work. This work must be done, brethren; and if a church does not have men who are competent to do the work, by all means let them import a man or men according to their needs and ability to take care of them; and if these do their work well, let them be counted worthy of double honor, or stipend. O, how we need shepherds! Our flocks are scattered, our sheep have all gone astray. For the sake of the cause we love, brethren, stop arguing and go to work for Christ.

Brethren sometimes say that if a disciple is not strong enough to stand alone or will not do his Christian duty without being urged, coaxed, invited, etc., he is no account, anyway. God's whole arrangement contradicts this. He has ordained that certain men be set apart and supported by the church to *tend* the flock, to *feed* his lambs, to watch in behalf of the souls of his children. Let the



reader get his New Testament and read carefully the fifth chapter of First Thessalonians from the twelfth verse to the close. In verse 12 Paul says: "But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves." Now he adds a postscript to the elders: "And we exhort you, brethren." First he beseeches the brethren to esteem the elders, and then he exhorts the elders to encourage the faint-hearted, etc. "We beseech you, brethren," to esteem the elders; "and we exhort *you*, brethren," you elders, to "admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all." So God recognized the fact that there would be weak, faint-hearted, faltering, and even disorderly Christians, and he has arranged that these be cared for. It is the duty of *every* child of God to do all he can in caring for the little ones in the kingdom of heaven, "even these least;" but the work demands that men competent and qualified be enabled to give their whole time to this work. All around us people are perishing who never heard the gospel, and the churches that should be centers of power, cities set on a hill, radiating the light of the gospel into the darkest corners of the earth, are wrangling,

slaving, driveling, debating, deteriorating, dying, and going to the devil; and all for the want of *food—real spiritual food*—not the husks of hobbyistic harangues or “sect-skinning” sermons from legalistic laggards in the religion of Christ. To all elders let us say, with Paul: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, *to feed the church of the Lord* which he purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20: 28.) To every preacher may we say, with Paul, again: “Take *heed to thyself*, and to *thy teaching*. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.” (1 Tim. 4: 16.) To all congregations say: “We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake. And: “Remember them that *had* the rule over you [viz., Paul, Peter, Stephen, James, John], men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith.” (Heb. 13: 7.) And: “The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me [them], these things do.” (Phil. 4: 9.) And by all means “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” (Rom. 13: 12.)

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. How should the elders be regarded by the members of their flock?
2. Why should they be esteemed and loved?
3. Should the members follow the example of the elders?
4. In what way should Christians submit to the elders?
5. Is a man who will not submit to the elders guilty of disobedience to God?
6. How far should the members obey the elders?
7. Is a member allowed to rebel against the decision of the elders simply because he wants to have his own way? If he does, of what is he guilty?
8. If a man believes the elders to be in the wrong on any matter, what should he do?
9. How will the faithful elders receive and treat such a man?
10. If a man charges that the elders have done wrong, how should the other members treat his charges? Read carefully 1 Tim. 5: 19. Remember this when you hear the elders spoken against?
11. What does it mean to count the elders worthy of double honor?
12. How much of the elders' time will it require to care for the church properly.
13. How can we find men who are able to spare so much time from their personal affairs?



14. What proof can you offer that the churches of the New Testament supported or paid their elders?
15. Is it right to support them now?
16. Is there not as great demand on their time now as in the first century?
17. Is the work any less important?
18. What is the greatest need of the churches with which you are acquainted?

## CHAPTER V.

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### How Elders Are Made.

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It has been said that "poets are born, not made." This is also true in some sense of elders. There is no doubt that some of the qualifications required in an elder are attained by him or developed in his character, and a lack of these would unfit him for the work; and sometimes circumstances of a man's life might render him ineligible for the office or work of an elder. If a man is unable to control his family and his children are known to be guilty of misconduct, to be riotous and unruly, or if his wife is a busybody, a tattler, etc., he is not suitable for an elder, although he may not be at all responsible for the wrongdoing of his family. This may seem upon first thought to be unjust, but upon more mature study it will be seen to be both just and wise. Such a wife and such children, especially when they are considered members of the church, are certain to have difficulties with other members of the church, and the husband and father might not be able impartially to decide between them; or if he is, he is liable to be accused of partiality. In the civil courts he would be disqualified as a juror.

But, in addition to these attained qualifications,

the elder should have certain natural qualifications; hence in that sense he is born, not made. He should at least have good sense. A man who is not normal either physically or mentally would hardly be suitable for an elder. We know human nature by knowing our own nature; and if we are not an average normal human being, we cannot know the feelings, weaknesses, and temptations of others.

Some men have by nature what others have by culture and attainment. Some men are kind, gentle, and meek by nature; others have to develop these beautiful graces in their characters; but, whether natural or attained, an elder must possess these. Whatever else is necessary to make a man an elder of a church, it is certain that he must have developed or inherited, or both developed and inherited, the characteristics required by the New Testament. And these should not have come to him in a purposeless and accidental way. He should have been training himself for the work of an elder. Every congregation, and especially its elders, should always be developing and training men with a view to making them elders, at least preparing them for the eldership, so that whenever there is a need for them, either in the church that trained them or some other that they may chance to be members of, they will be ready. We need men who are trained for service in all lines of Christian endeavor, and there is no greater responsibility or nobler work than



that which is placed in the hands of the elders of a church of Christ.

Let us say, then, that the first essential in the making of an elder is:

I. *Training*. Paul says that "if a man *desires* the office of a bishop, he desires a good work." In this sentence the word "desires" is used twice, but it is from different Greek words. The first word is *oregetai*, which means "to reach out after," "to stretch forward to," "to give oneself up to the love of," etc. The second word is *epithumei*, which means "to wish for," "crave," or "long for," etc. Either word expresses strong desire, but the first signifies aspiration to obtain, efforts to reach, etc. The sentence might be paraphrased thus: "If a man seeks the office of a bishop and gives himself up to the preparation for it, he is desiring an honorable work." How else would a man stretch forward to the office of a bishop except by preparing for it? How else would he seek it? We could not suppose that he would canvass the congregation and work political schemes in order to influence the members to elect him. He could only aspire to the office by aspiring to possess the qualifications, to be able to do the work, and to merit the respect and esteem of a congregation that would be willing to submit to him.

He would acquire the qualifications only by experience in the Christian life, by growing in the graces of religion, and by the practice of self-denial and self-control. He would gain the abil-

ity to do the work by doing it. All the work that is done by the elders may be and should be done by all Christians, except that of ruling and overseeing the whole congregation, which can be done only when the church appoints them to do it and thereby agrees to submit to them. So the man who seeks the work of a bishop will learn to teach by teaching; he will learn to admonish the erring by practice. There are always people who need admonition and encouragement, and we are all our brother's keeper. This is another reason why a novice should not be appointed. Paul states one—namely, lest he become “puffed up.” But the man who has had the widest experience in Christian service is best fitted for the duties of an elder if he is otherwise qualified. A man who is rich in experience in the ordinary duties of a Christian will be able to perform the work of an elder. In all walks of life the man who most diligently meets the obligations that fall upon him and discharges whatever duties are incumbent is best prepared for promotion—for greater responsibilities and higher duties. So also the man who most faithfully lives the Christian life is best prepared to help others.

It is sometimes stated that when a man does the work of an elder he is then an elder and needs no appointing ceremony to make him an elder. In one sense this may be true; but it is not a systematic, a satisfactory, or a scriptural way of becoming an elder. If by doing the work a man does not excite jealousies or bring down upon

himself the charge of wanting to “run” things, and if the congregation tacitly agrees to submit to him and to be ruled by him, then he is, indeed, an elder. But how often would such a condition exist? Even if that condition should prevail, in ordinary circumstances the man’s authority would certainly be questioned if he undertook to discipline the disorderly members. For that reason that manner of becoming an elder is not satisfactory. The following considerations would lead us to believe it is not the scriptural way:

1. In the New Testament the elders were *appointed*. (Acts 14: 23; Tit. 1: 5.) They did not merely assume the position. It would not have been at all necessary to leave Titus in Crete to *appoint* elders if no appointing ceremony is necessary.

2. The Holy Spirit has given minute instructions as to what kind of men should be appointed to the eldership. This was all unnecessary if any man who does the work of an elder is thereby constituted an elder. The Holy Spirit would no doubt have given only the duties of elders and said nothing about their qualifications if that contention were correct. If a novice—new convert—begins at once faithfully to do the work of an elder, is he then an elder? If so, the precaution against appointing a novice was useless. If a man who does not rule well his own house does the work which the Scriptures specify as the work of an elder, is he, therefore, an elder? Why, then, was that required as one of the qualifica-



tions of an elder? In fact, it seems that the contention that the eldership is not an office among Christians which a man can enter and hold only by the consent and appointment of those whom he rules, makes useless and even absurd the instructions concerning the character of men who should be made elders. If a woman should do the work assigned to the elders, would she be an elder? Or if all the men of a congregation should do the work of the elders, would they all be elders? This condition could not exist, it matters not how faithfully all the men serve the Lord, because there are certain duties that belong to an elder that a man cannot do unless he is authorized by the congregation to do them. He could not rule the church unless the church agrees to submit to him and to recognize him as an overseer. We conclude, therefore, that after a man has developed or acquired the qualities of character required in an elder, which has been set down as the first step necessary in becoming an elder, he must be—

II. *Appointed or Set Apart.* It is believed that what has been said is sufficient to prove that some form of appointment is necessary; but there is no scarcity of proof on this point, and we shall offer a little further evidence. If all men who assume the responsibilities and do the work of elders are by that made elders, Paul would have left Titus in Crete to build up the church and instruct all the members to do the work instead of instructing him to *appoint* elders to do certain duties.

Paul addressed the Philippian Epistle “to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.” (Phil. 1: 1.) Of course the bishops and deacons were included in “all the saints,” but they are mentioned as special individuals among the saints. They were unquestionably persons set apart or appointed to a special work—that of overseeing the flock, as we know from other scriptures. Again, Paul beseeches the Thessalonian church highly to esteem those who were over them in the Lord. How could some men be over the church if they were *all* privileged to be over it? What would they be over if none of them are subject to certain ones? It would be impossible for the church to obey those who are over it without an understanding as to who they are, and no man is over the church unless the church submits to him. He must, therefore, be placed over the church by some authority. . Two questions naturally present themselves here: (1) Who can or should do this appointing? (2) How is the appointing done, and by what ceremony?

In answering these questions we shall take the liberty to quote from others who are more able to speak on this subject. After arguing ably and at length to prove that the ordination ceremony consisted in fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands, Alexander Campbell gives the following directions for appointing elders and deacons:

“1. The congregation, after having proved the abilities and capacities to teach and rule found in

its own members, and, above all, tested their character as approved by those within and without the congregation, appoints a day for the proper election of its officers.

“2. Having agreed upon those eligible, possessing, in an acceptable measure, the qualifications commanded by the apostles, a day is appointed for their solemn consecration to the Lord.

“3. The day arrives. The church assemble with fasting and proceed to select members to impose hands on the officers-elect in behalf of the congregation. The persons thus chosen then proceed to impose their hands on the heads of those elected, while all unite in prayer to God that those brethren chosen by them, and now devoted to the Lord as their bishops and deacons, may, feeling their responsibilities, with all diligence and fidelity to the Lord, and with all humility of mind and affectionate concern for the brotherhood, exercise the office with which they are hereby invested in the name of the Lord, according to the true intent and meaning of the Christian institution, as they shall account to the Lord at his glorious appearing and kingdom. The whole congregation then, lifting up their voice, say, ‘*Amen.*’ ”

It will be observed that Mr. Campbell was giving directions for a congregation that was being organized for the first time; hence it was necessary to select certain members of the congregation to impose hands on those who were being ordained as bishops or deacons. If the congre-



gation already had ordained officers, but needed others either to fill a vacancy or because their number was not sufficient to administer the affairs of the congregation, their ordained officers would impose their hands on the newly elected officers. On this point Mr. Campbell says:

“It will be remembered that we are writing in reference to a new church—to a congregation coming into the apostolic order; for after being once set in order, it will be unnecessary to select persons to ordain, or to introduce other seniors into a participation of the oversight or ministry of the community. Those already ordained will, for the brotherhood, always act in such matters. They are the standing presbytery or senate of the congregation.” (This quotation from Mr. Campbell will be found in the 1835 volume of the *Millennial Harbinger*; or his whole essay on this subject can be found in Dr. Brents’ “*Gospel Sermons*,” Chapter XX.)

It will be observed that in the directions given by Mr. Campbell there is, first, an *election*, and, second, an *ordination*. The whole congregation selects or elects the men whom they would have to be *appointed* as officers over them, and then at a convenient time the officers-elect are ordained or inaugurated by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands. The whole congregation takes part in this ceremony also; but only the presbytery, if they have one, selected members if they do not, lay hands on those being ordained or appointed.

This seems to be the scriptural order. In the church at Jerusalem the whole “multitude of the disciples,” at the command of the twelve apostles, *appointed* men to serve the church. Notice, there was first an *election*, then an *ordination* or *appointing*. After the whole church had elected the seven, the record gives their names—the names of all those “whom they set before the apostle: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them.” (Acts 6: 6.) It certainly seems proper that the whole church should select their overseers; for the Lord strictly requires that the church submit to the elders and obey them, and no earthly authority can put a man over the church who is objectionable to the church. Alexander Campbell argues that only members of the congregation should lay hands upon those already elected by the congregation; that visiting preachers or visiting elders from other congregations are not the ones to do either the electing or the appointing.

But how can the will of the entire congregation be ascertained? The whole transaction should be participated in by the whole congregation—if in no other way, by the sanction of presence. If any one in the congregation has any reasonable or scriptural objection to anything that is being done, he should be allowed to state the objection, with reasons for it; and it should be considered fully, fairly, and in the spirit of Christ. If it can be explained to the satisfaction of the objector, well and good. If he cannot be satisfied, but if all

the rest of the congregation are satisfied that the objection is not sustained by the Scriptures, but that the brother is in error either honestly or willfully, there seems to be no other choice but to proceed with the organization. The brother should be admonished in all meekness and love to abandon the objection.

Brother Campbell said the congregation should express its wish by a vote. Many people object to voting in the church, and there can be little doubt that the ordinary business matters of the congregation should not be submitted to a vote. That is why we must have elders. There were objectors to voting in Campbell's day, and in the essay from which the above quotation is taken he treats the objections in his usual vigorous and masterly style. He begins his argument with this sentence: "Some Christians are opposed to voting in the church. They only vote against voting."

A number of persons together cannot agree on anything or could not know when they are agreed, unless they expressed their minds or wish in some way. Voting in an orderly and systematic way in organizing a congregation, which would then prevent further voting on every minor question, is far better than letting the church remain unorganized and the work undone, while the members wrangle, dispute, and contend about the "whys," the "whats," and the "whos" of the church. In every unorganized congregation every little question must be decided and settled by the whole body, because they have no officers to



administer their affairs. Either all questions must be submitted to the whole body, or else some self-appointed man or men must assume arbitrarily to manage the business of the church; and men who assume such authority are usually unsuitable for the place and objectionable to a large number of the members. But if the congregation does not submit to them, there will always be strife. God's way is best. Let us sacrifice our opinions and be governed by his word.

We have cited one New Testament example to show the directions Brother Campbell gave are scriptural, and we might say that all the cases of ordination in the New Testament are the same. On this point allow this quotation from Conybeare and Howson:

*"In all cases, so far as we may infer from the recorded instances in the Acts, those who were selected for the performance of church officers were solemnly set apart for the duties to which they devoted themselves. This ordination they always received, whether the office to which they were called was permanent or temporary. The church, of which they were members, devoted a preparatory season to 'fasting and prayer;' and then those who were to be set apart were consecrated to their work by that solemn and touching symbolical act, the laying on of hands, which has been ever since appropriated to the same purpose and meaning. And thus, in answer to the faith and prayers of the church, the spiritual gifts necessary for the performance of the office were be-*

stowed by Him who is the 'Lord and Giver of life.' ” (“Life and Epistles of Paul,” Volume II., page 437.)

Those who object to laying on hands say that it was done for the purpose of conferring some spiritual gift. In reply to this it is usually argued that none but the apostles could confer spiritual gifts by the imposing of hands, and we know that others than the apostles laid their hands on those being ordained or set apart for service. (Acts 13: 1-6.) In the Old Testament they practiced the laying on of hands as a ceremony of consecration, and not for the purpose of conferring a gift. The children of Israel laid their hands upon the Levites to consecrate them to the priesthood, and we could hardly suppose that it would be contended that the children of Israel could confer the Holy Spirit. (Num. 8: 9, 10.) Luke does not give any account of the institution of the eldership, as he does of the diaconate, perhaps because this same office was a well-known feature of the Jewish synagogue. The synagogue naturally served as a model in the organization of churches. On this point Brother David Lipscomb says:

“So God set Moses and the elders the judges to decide the difficulties that would rise among the Jewish people. These elders in the different tribes, families, and cities continued to adjudge the difficulties and settle differences until the days of Jesus Christ. This order of elders, with their duties, was by Jesus and the Holy Spirit trans-

ferred to the churches of God, and the same duties seem to have followed them." ("Queries and Answers," page 142.)

We may well suppose that the Old Testament manner of ordination followed them also. If any reader is inclined to think that there is no appointing or ordination ceremony needed now, he should ask himself by what consistency could we retain an officer and yet eliminate the office; and if we retain both officer and the office, how can we eliminate that which is essential to induct him into the office? How can a man be placed in any office without some form of election, initiation, inauguration, consecration, or ordination?

While the plan suggested by Brother Campbell is held to be scriptural and we recommend it, it must be understood that it is not the purpose of these lessons to contend for any plan or theory. The Lord's work must be done if we desire to please him and to receive his blessings, and all Christians, of course, want to follow the New Testament order in both work and worship; but where there is a difference of opinion as to why a certain thing was done, it would be poor judgment to let that difference interfere with the work. We must not neglect to appoint elders in *some* way—some way satisfactory to the congregation to be allotted to them. Never mind whether it is satisfactory to all the editors and preachers in the brotherhood or not. They differ; and we cannot, therefore, follow all of them. Let us earnestly and prayerfully try to learn for



ourselves what God teaches and follow that. Do not let the things said herein stir up a controversy, but rather let them provoke you to love and good works.

The author of this book believes that the appointing should be done as indicated in the preceding paragraphs, but he does not contend that it cannot be done acceptably in any other way. So far as he has been able to see, that is the method used in all the cases that are reported in the New Testament; but there are some good brethren who contend that hands were imposed in those cases to confer the Holy Spirit, and out of deference to that view it is thought best to leave the manner of appointing optional with the congregations. The author has, however, clearly shown his views in the matter, and he has done so intentionally; but he is willing to concede that it is a debatable question, and he does not, therefore, dogmatically contend that no way is acceptable which does not include the laying on of hands. He does contend, however, that the practice of most of our congregations of the present time is wrong. The result of such practice is all the proof that needs to be cited. The appointing is done without any sort of solemnity or ceremony, and it is most frequently done without the acquiescence of the congregation. Somebody nonchalantly announces that Brother —— will, after two weeks, be an elder of the congregation if no one objects. Those members who happen to hear the announcement pay about as much heed to it

as they do to the announcement of a midweek prayer meeting. The two weeks expire; and no objection having been offered, Brother —— is an elder!

That is one way that is in use to-day. Other congregations wait till some preacher comes along and appoints elders all on his own authority; or if he gets suggestions, they come from some few members who may have personal reasons for their choice.

Either method is sadly, shamefully, and manifestly wrong; and the results of either process when not entirely negligible are disastrous. This is a serious matter, and it should be seriously attended to.

If a congregation about to appoint elders or deacons cannot agree to follow the New Testament custom and lay hands on them, thinking that it was done in those cases to confer a gift, let them at least not dispense with *all* solemnities and ceremonies. Let the whole church acquiesce in the formalities in *some* way, so that it can be truthfully said that the elders thus made are over them in the Lord. Let them submit to the elders. Appointing elders is a very important and far-reaching step. It is full of possibilities, both of good and of evil. Such a step should always be attended by fasting and prayer. Why eliminate the fasting and prayer even if we do refuse to lay on hands? Do we not need it as much as the apostles and other inspired and Spirit-guided men of the New Testament did? Some of our present-

day congregations never did anything in the history of their work that they regarded as solemn and serious enough to fast and pray over. It is small wonder that there are factions and strife among them. Let us return to the New Testament pattern, brethren, and have qualified men selected *by the congregation* and duly appointed to the eldership; let the elders rule well, and let the church submit to them and obey them, "esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work's sake." That would mean a new day in the history of the church in our country. God speed the day!

For the aid of those who may wish to appoint elders without the laying on of hands the following program is suggested. It will make the act solemn and impressive, and it will also be the act of the whole church. It is given, however, simply as a suggestion, and it may be modified by those who lead in the service as they may think proper.

### THE ORDINATION OF ELDERS.

#### PROGRAM.

Those who are to be appointed having previously been selected by the congregation for their overseers, the whole church assembles to ordain or appoint them, to inaugurate them; or if these terms are not pleasing to the feelings of all, let us say that they have come together publicly to acknowledge their elders. The meeting has been repeatedly and thoroughly announced, and every member has been urged to be present. When the whole church has assembled with solemn purpose and the elders-elect have taken the front seat, the following order may be observed:

1. Hymn.
2. Scripture reading. (1 Tim. 3: 1-7; Tit. 1: 5-9; 1 Pet. 5: 1-4.)



3. Prayer.

4. Hymn.

5. Sermon or talk on eldership.

6. The evangelist, or the leader, asks the elders-elect to stand and face the audience; and when they have done this, he says: "These are the men, brothers and sisters, that you have elected to serve this church as overseers; and now, to assure these men that you have chosen them for that office, and to actively express your approval of the steps now being taken, I shall ask you to answer this question: Do you, as members of the ——— church of Christ, now publicly acknowledge that you have chosen these brethren to be your overseers, and do you now agree to submit to them and to obey them in all things that God has commanded them as bishops of the church to require of you? If this be the sense of the congregation, you will please signify it by standing." (Let the whole audience stand.) When the people have resumed their seats, the leader turns to the elders-elect, who are still standing, and asks: "Do you, John Loyal and James Faithful and Philip Worthy and Cephas Humble [the leader will call their real names], who have been so highly honored by the people of God as to be chosen to lead them and to direct their affairs, now accept this charge, and do you solemnly pledge yourselves to this church in the sight of God, to whom you shall account for every member of this body, to learn and to perform the duties of your office to the best of your understanding and ability?" Each one shall answer for himself: "I do." Then shall the leader say: "This, then, brethren, seals the covenant. You and the other members of this church have entered into a solemn agreement. They have honored you by placing you in the most exalted, because the most responsible, position in the whole church of God. You are now their bishops, and they have placed themselves under your oversight. You have promised to lead them, to feed them, and to watch concerning their souls. In order to perform these duties faithfully, you will have need of the help that comes from God; therefore let us now invoke his blessings on what we have here done."

7. Prayer.

8. Hymn.

9. Benediction.

10. Congratulations and general handshaking.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What is the first step necessary in making an elder?
2. Name some of the qualifications that an elder *must* have by birth. Name some that he *may* have by birth.
3. How can a man who desires to be an elder acquire the ability to do the work?
4. If a man assumes the position of an elder, is he, therefore, an elder?
5. If some member of the congregation should deny that such a man was an elder and refuse to submit to him, could there be any action taken against him, or against the members?
6. What is the second step necessary in becoming an elder?
7. Give, in full, the steps Brother Campbell said should be taken in appointing elders and deacons.
8. What do some people think the laying on of hands was for?
9. Could you find some place in the Bible where they imposed hands as a ceremony and not to confer the Spirit?
10. If we eliminate fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands from our appointing ceremony, in what would the *appointing* consist?
11. Granting that there is no need to lay on hands, is there any reason why we should eliminate the fasting and prayer?

12. Did your congregation or the leaders of your congregation, as a body, ever fast and pray over anything?
13. Who should elect the elders?
14. Who should appoint them?
15. Does your congregation have elders?
16. If so, how were they appointed?
17. Is the congregation in submission to them?
18. If not, would it not be best for the congregation to all together solemnly agree to submit to them and obey them and by that place them "over you in the Lord?"
19. If that is not scriptural, what is?
20. Should personal animus lead any one to endeavor to find fault with the elders and pronounce them unfit?
21. Should personal preference or favoritism cause any one to suggest or nominate a man for the eldership?
22. To avoid this, would it not be best that making elders be done with fasting and prayer?
23. Is fasting and prayer ever wrong except when it is done to be seen of men?
24. If we feel at liberty to leave off the fasting, can we afford to omit the prayers?
25. The whole future welfare, the growth and prosperity, and the final salvation of the congregation depend, to a great extent, upon the kind of men who are placed as elders over it. Should not every member, therefore, be interested? Should not the whole proceedings be seriously, earnestly, and prayerfully carried out?



## CHAPTER VI.

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### How Elders Are Unmade.

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Frequently this question is asked: "If a man is once an elder, is he not always an elder?" It seems strange that such a question would be asked, but we hear it often. It is just another evidence of the lack of information on these questions that is seen everywhere. After we have learned the lessons on the nature of the office of a bishop and how it is entered, there will be no such difficulty as the above question implies. Some men have contended that if a man is once an elder he is always an elder. One advocate of that view says that an "elder can no more resign his eldership than a mule can resign his muleship." Now, it will have to be admitted that there is a striking resemblance between the present-day eldership in some places and the "muleship" of our well-known hybrid. And his chief characteristic is plainly displayed by an elder (?) who insists that if he was once an elder he is an elder forever; that he cannot resign; that he cannot be impeached or recalled or any other way unmade.

The men who hold that view contend also that the eldership is not an office. They oppose any appointing ceremony, and affirm that any man is an elder if he does the work of an elder. O, some of them might say that he must possess the qual-

ifications; but any man who will *assume* the position will also assume that he possesses the qualifications. He will stoutly contend that he has them all. And who shall tell him that he does not possess them? If no one has the right to tell a man when he *is* an elder, who shall tell him when he *is not* an elder? If the congregation has no right to set men of its choice over it, what right has it to deny that *any* man is its overseer if he assumes to be? The whole position is absurd.

No man is an overseer of a congregation unless he is elected and appointed by the congregation to that office, and the same authority that puts men into that position can take them out if there is a reason that would justify such a serious step. When elders are made, they and the congregation enter into a solemn agreement, and this agreement should be sacredly regarded by both. No one should think of breaking the covenant or of undoing the arrangement without the best of reasons. If such reasons exist, they should be carefully and prayerfully weighed before any action is taken. The Lord was asked to recognize and bless the action when the man was made an elder, and now the action must not be rescinded unless it is plain that the Lord is not pleased with the man's conduct and would not recognize him as worthy of so responsible a place in his church. Then the Lord can be invoked to bless the proceedings against the brother. The Lord made Saul king of Israel; but when Saul proved unsuitable for the place, the Lord reversed

his act and deposed Saul. Therefore even if a man is appointed to the eldership by fasting, prayer, and the laying on of hands, there is no reason why he may not be deposed if the good of the church demands it.

The following are some reasons that would justify a congregation in retiring an elder and in placing another man in his position:

1. If an elder fails to do the work of an elder, the work he was ordained to do, he should not be considered a bishop or treated as the New Testament requires Christians to treat the bishops. But some formal action should be taken against him. It is no unusual thing to see members of a church refuse to respect and recognize the so-called "elders," but those elders continue to be "bosses" and to claim authority. When an elder fails to do the work required of an elder, he must be impeached and some one else put into his office who will care for the congregation. It matters not what caused the failure, if it is a *failure*, the work must be done and somebody must be appointed for it. If the man has failed because of negligence and indifference, of course his would be a "dishonorable discharge." He might fail through incompetency, but this would not occur if proper care were used in appointing men; or a man might fail through ill health. In either of the two last-mentioned cases the man should be treated with all kindness, courtesy, and love; but some one must do the work which he cannot do. He ought to get out of the way voluntarily.



2. If an elder loses his qualifications, he should be recalled. Any man who believes in the possibility of apostasy will surely not deny that an elder can lose his qualifications. Many good men go astray. Preachers and elders are not exempt. A man who was once appointed to the eldership of a large congregation became guilty of atrocious sins, was indicted in the civil courts on capital crimes, fled the country, and is now a refugee from justice. Perhaps some gentle, consistent, and sweet-spirited hobbyist will insist that he is still an elder or overseer of the church of God and watches concerning the souls of the flock.

When an elder loses his qualifications, the congregation should take formal action to depose him, whether he is criminal or not. He may just be worldly and unconcerned about the Lord's work.

An elder may lose his qualifications through old age and a failure of physical and mental strength. Where that is true, the above directions do not apply. The aged brother must be allowed to retain all the honor, but some one else will have to do the work. Great care must be used in such a case.

3. If an elder becomes unacceptable to a congregation, he should be retired if he will not voluntarily resign. A man cannot be *over* people who will not be *under* him. When an elder finds that he is objectionable to the congregation, that they will not heed his instructions and will not take his advice, he should resign. Even if the aversion was caused by his loyalty to God's word,

he would as well resign; for he has lost his influence with the people and he cannot check the error. It will never happen, however, that a *whole church* will turn against a man for such a cause unless his manner is at fault. When an elder is appointed, he is the choice of the congregation. He was elected by the members to be over them in the Lord. They put themselves under his watch care, and they promised to submit to him and to obey him in all that is right. They should, therefore, remain true to the agreement. If they do not, God will judge them. A true elder is the Lord's appointed; and if the members rebel against him, they are disobedient to God. Any action taken against an elder except for scriptural and righteous reasons is treason against Jehovah. Remember Miriam. (Num. 12: 9, 10.)

But if an elder has become inflated with the honor conferred on him and desires to show his authority to the extent that he is arbitrary and domineering and demagogical, he should be impeached. Let him remember Saul. (1 Sam. 15: 17-23.)

If an elder shows partiality in dealing with the members and after due admonition refuses to correct the fault, he will lose his influence and power over the members.

If an elder lacks patience, loses his self-control, and becomes angry when dealing with the problems of the brethren—if he does this habitually—he will not be loved and respected by his members, and he will eventually cease to be accepta-

ble to them, and he could not, therefore, do the work of a bishop. He should not, then, continue in the office of a bishop.

If an elder does anything habitually that is not worthy of emulation or that could not be held up as an example before those young men in the congregation who aspire to the office of bishop, he should be asked to resign. Elders must "become ensamples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5: 3.)

If for any reason an elder loses his influence with his people or becomes odious to them, he can no longer do for them what an elder is ordained to do, and the circumstances demand his resignation. The congregation, of course, must be long-suffering and forbearing, and must overlook such faults and foibles as are common to men.

If an elder is gentle and humble and shows a willingness to hear suggestions; if he frequently confesses his faults and asks for the prayers of his congregation, he need not fear that mere imperfections will render him unacceptable to his people.

It is the man who loves the preëminence, the self-important man, who excites contempt. The man who disregards the wishes of his people and insists upon his own way (he must have his preacher, his song book, his time for the meeting, etc.) is the man who becomes obnoxious. He ought to be retired.

It must be remembered that all public men are criticized; and, therefore, the mere complaints of critics against an elder must not be countenanced.



They should not be allowed. The faithful Christian should rebuke the critics every time unkind criticism is heard. All this, however, is thoroughly covered in the scriptures that teach Christians to esteem the elders highly in love.

When formal action is to be taken against an elder, the whole congregation should come together in solemn session. Every step should be taken with due deliberation and with fasting and prayer. No personal feeling should be allowed to enter into the transaction, and no accusation against the elder should be considered unless it comes through two or three persons, and those persons must not be in any sort of league. (1 Tim. 5: 19.) Personal grievances should not be heard on such an occasion. They must come up at another time. If the accused elder confesses his shortcomings and manifests his desire to do better, he should be retained unless the offense is such that it would forever stain his reputation. In such a case he must, if he is penitent, be retained in the church, but not in the eldership. The spirit of Christ and brotherly love will be a guarantee against error in such proceedings. Any such action that is not controlled by such a spirit will be a miserable failure and will bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. In such a meeting the other elders—those not accused—will have charge and will conduct the deliberations.

In a case where all the elders are unacceptable to the congregation, outside help must be invited.

Godly men from some other congregation and some faithful evangelist should be brought to the scene of trouble, and perhaps through their mediation and prayers a reconciliation can be effected. Think of the elders being in league against their flock and the flock up in arms against the elders! Could a more disgraceful thing be imagined? It has been known to occur in these wicked last days. Such things come, however, as a result of our unscriptural practice—our loose, careless way of appointing elders. When the churches begin to fast and pray over that all-determining act, these things will not occur. When they do occur, there is sin somewhere. It is either on the part of the elders or of the congregation, and most likely both.

Why self-respecting men will insist that they are the overseers of a congregation when they know that the congregation is not under them, will not submit to them, and does not respect them, is beyond comprehension. It certainly needs psychological explication.

But let us suppose that where the whole congregation is antagonistic to the elders it is because the congregation wants to depart from the word of God and bring in some unscriptural practice and the elders will not allow it. If that be the trouble, then the elders are exactly right, and they are unquestionably doing what God ordained them to do in keeping down such digression. But they should be patient and gentle, and should manifest a spirit of earnestness in trying

to show the people the error. If they will make it clear that they are not opposing this movement simply to show their authority, but because it is wrong, they will convince some of the members. If they will show that it is their love for the word of God, and not pure "mulishness" on their part that causes them to stand against the innovation, they will save some of the members, perhaps a majority of them, and thus they will save the church and put down the wrong or force the wrongdoers to withdraw from the congregation. The elders must be sure that it is the WORD OF GOD, and not their own word, not a partisan doctrine or prejudicial whim, that they contend for. They should meet with the members and hear their complaints and their desires and discuss them fully; and if error is advocated, they should point it out in gentleness and love. That is their work. They should be able to teach the congregation what God has revealed on all questions. Where the elders just persist in directing the affairs without regard for the wishes of the congregation, ignoring their complaints and vetoing their suggestions, without giving reasons, they need not be surprised if the whole congregation quits or divides and forms another congregation and builds another house of worship. If such a thing happens under those conditions, THE ELDERS ARE AT FAULT.

The cases that have been observed by us came as a result of such behavior on the part of the elders. They would not meet with the congrega-



tion and discuss the cause of trouble. They would not agree to call in disinterested brethren and lay the charges and counter charges before them. They would make no concessions whatever, but assumed to rule with an iron hand. Yet the congregation was not in submission to them, was not willingly under them, did not respect them, and would not obey them. Consequently there was no peace, no harmony, no worship, no fellowship, no love, and no Christianity.

Our greatest need is Christianity—just simple, primitive, New Testament Christianity. That would prove a panacea for all our ills. Let us try faithfully to follow Christ, “doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.” (Phil. 2: 3-8.) “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and railing, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you.” (Eph. 4: 31, 32.) Paul, the apostle of Christ and the prisoner of the Lord,

even now beseeches "you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with ALL LOWLINESS and MEEKNESS, with LONG-SUFFERING, FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4: 1-4.) "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8: 9, 10.)

Where these scriptures are observed, there will never be a "*church fuss*." We must abandon our hobbies and return to God's word if we expect to be saved.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Can an elder resign his position?
2. If he moves away from a church, is he still one of its elders, and does he have the oversight of it?
3. When he contemplates such a change, should he not publicly surrender his claim, show an interest in having some one take his work, and ask the congregation to release him?
4. Can an elder ever be recalled, deposed, or retired?
5. If so, who has power to take such action?
6. By virtue of what does an elder hold his position?
7. If no one has power to remove an elder, who has power to make one?
8. If the congregation has no power to refuse to allow a man to control its affairs, why

could not any presumptuous egotist assume control?

9. On what grounds would a church be justified in taking action against an elder?
10. In what spirit should such steps be taken always?
11. If an elder is unacceptable to a congregation, can he do the work God teaches an elder to do?
12. Can a man be *over* a congregation that will not be *under* him?
13. When such a condition exists, does it not indicate that there is sin there; that the Scriptures are being disobeyed by one side or both sides to the dispute?
14. Should they not, therefore, come together and discuss the trouble, locate the sin, and correct it?
15. What will cause an elder to become unacceptable to his people?
16. Would an elder who possesses *all* the qualifications be guilty of those things?
17. Will a congregation that follows the word of God become dissatisfied with *scriptural* elders?
18. If it does, of what is it guilty?
19. In order to keep the people from growing tired of an elder, would it not be well for him to *study* in order to have new thoughts and lessons for them?
20. Should an elder not also keep himself in the background as much as possible, oversee-



ing the work, but allowing others to do it?

21. Must not the elders develop the talent in the congregation?
22. Quote Eph. 4: 1-7; 4: 31-32; also Phil. 2: 1-11.

NOTE.—Let the teacher see that these passages are memorized by each member of the class. Every Christian should know them. Do not play at studying these important lessons. If your class is not really in earnest, you would better quit.

## CHAPTER VII.

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### The Diaconate.

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If we confine our study of the diaconate to the English version of the New Testament, our information on that subject is likely to be rather fragmentary and unsatisfactory; for though we find the deacons distinctly mentioned as a special class of servants in the church and though there are some very strict requirements given for those who would serve as deacons, we are not given any undisputed history of their origin and but little information with regard to their functions. We are accustomed to gain a great deal of information from the sixth chapter of the Acts, but we must remember that those seven who were appointed to see that the Hellenistic widows were not deprived of their share in the "daily ministrations" are nowhere called "deacons" in the English Scriptures. The Greek word which designates them is *diakonos*, and it is afterwards employed to designate those who were appointed to the diaconate; but its primary meaning was simply "minister," "servant," or "attendant," and it is used many times in the New Testament to designate any servant—used without any technical or official signification whatever. It is even applied to the Christ in Rom. 15: 8. Paul says

Christ “was made the minister [*diakonos*] of circumcision.” The same apostle several times calls himself a “minister” (*diakonos*) of God. (See 2 Cor. 6: 4; Eph. 3: 7.) It is difficult, therefore, to determine whether the seven were the same officers or servants, if you prefer it, mentioned by Paul in Phil. 1: 1; 1 Tim. 3: 8. The word *diakonos* occurs some thirty times in the New Testament, and only about four times is it used as an official designation. In point of time the earliest mention of deacons as officers or appointed servants in the church is found in the salutation of the Epistle to the Philippians (unless we consider Phœbe an officer in the church, which is probable, but not certain). A little later in the history of the church we find Paul giving Timothy careful instructions as to the qualifications of the men who were to be appointed to the diaconate. It is certain, however, from these references, that the service of deacons was already established when these Epistles were written. How long it had been established, we cannot definitely determine.

It is pretty generally assumed that the ministry of deacons began with the appointment of the seven at Jerusalem, but this is not undisputed. Some very reputable scholars insist that an order of deacons had existed in the church even before that time. As the word *presbuteros* means more than simply elderly or aged, likewise the word *neoteros* means more than younger in years, or youthful. It is thought, therefore, that the elder



and the younger in the infant church were the same class of servants who were afterwards called the "bishops" and the "deacons." The young men mentioned in Acts 5: 6-10, who attended to the burying of Ananias and Sapphira, are by some supposed to be the deacons. It is also thought by some Bible scholars that the diaconate, like the eldership, was borrowed from the Jewish institutions. They claim that there was a class of servants or attendants in the synagogue that corresponded to the deacons in the Christian church. The twentieth verse of the fourth chapter of Luke is used to support this inference. The word for "attendant" in that verse is synonymous with *diakonos*, and, of course, may designate any servant or a special class of servants. Every man is left free to form his own opinion about the meaning of the word in this verse, and no one can say definitely that he is right and the other man is wrong.

We are practically shut up to one passage of scripture in the study of the service of deacons. Let us, therefore, quote it in full:

"Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, if they be blameless. Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

For they that have served well as deacons gain to themselves a good standing, and great boldness in the faith, which is in Christ Jesus." (1 Tim. 3: 8-13.)

From this passage we learn that those who would serve as deacons must possess the following qualifications:

1. They must be grave, or sober-minded.
2. Not double-tongued, or two-faced.
3. Not given to much wine.
4. Not greedy of filthy lucre—no lover of money.
5. They must hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.
6. The husband of one wife.
7. Ruling well their own houses.

From these requirements we would naturally suppose that the deacon's work is of some importance. They are not as numerous as those stipulated for the elders; but they embrace the most important ones, except the deacons are not required to be "apt to teach." It has been observed by some one that the deacons were to *hold* the mystery of faith, while the elders were to be able to impart it to others. They must be sound in the faith, but the elders must also have an aptitude for teaching. We rather think this qualification required the deacons conscientiously to remain sound in the faith, not to waver for fear or favor.

We can gain but little information from this passage on the functions of the deacons. Some have supposed that the deacons were "sort of"

junior elders; that those who serve well as deacons gain to themselves a good step or degree and may be promoted to the eldership; and it is true that the elders were chosen from among the deacons in the churches of the second century. This, however, seems to have been the hierarchy in embryo, and we suspect the idea was born after the apostolic day. The duties of the bishops and deacons were, no doubt, different; but the degrees of rank and the importance of work is just the estimation of men. Some things that God has said may appear to us to be more important than some other of his commands, but we do not know that we are privileged to pronounce them so. However much the functions of the deacons may differ from those of the elders, it is impossible for them to please God and not perform their functions. Hence it is just as necessary that they serve faithfully as *deacons* as that the elders serve as *elders*. Let us notice the expression, "those who have served well as deacons." "Have served as deacons" is all one word in the Greek. It is *diakonesantes*, and it is translated by Dr. MacKnight, by Conybeare and Howson, by "Living Oracles," by Bloomfield, by George Ricker Berry, and by the King James translators thus: "Used the office of a deacon" or "performed the office of a deacon." Of course the rendering of the Revised Version does not differ from these in meaning, but it gives those whose righteous souls are vexed by the word "office" an opportunity to make a distinction where there is no dif-



ference. The expression, "those who serve well as deacons," must mean those who serve well in the position of deacons, or in the capacity of deacons, or in the office of deacons. The word might be translated "those who serve well as servants," but that would be but little better than Mr. William ("Billy") Sunday's "deacons who would not deac."

Whatever translation we use, we will get the idea that there were certain duties belonging to the deacons, and those who faithfully discharged them would be honored for it. Now the question that concerns us most is: What are those duties?

It is generally agreed that it was the work of the deacons to look after the temporal affairs of the church, while the elders overlooked its spiritual affairs. It would be the duty of the deacons in the present-day congregation to see to the lighting, heating, cleaning up, and maintaining the church building; to usher the crowds and ventilate the auditorium; to see that the emblems are prepared for the Lord's table; to always have a baptistery ready, whether indoors or out; and to care for the poor of the congregation—relieve their wants from the church treasury. All cases of need should be reported to the deacons. The care of the poor seems to have been the chief work of the deacons in the early church.

Of course it is doubtful whether the New Testament deacons did all the things named above, for they had no church houses to keep repaired or janitors to jog in those days. However, they

looked after all the temporal affairs that were necessary. All the things mentioned above must be done to-day in order to have system, comfort, and decency; and it seems that the deacons should attend to such matters.

It is a disputed point as to whether there was an order of deaconesses in the New Testament church, and there is probably no way definitely to decide the question. There is, however, some evidence in favor of the idea. But before we consider the evidence, let us remove any forebodings of heresy by observing that there is nothing in the work that belongs to the deacons that a woman cannot do consistently with the inhibitions laid upon her by the Scriptures. On the contrary, there is a part of the work that women seem eminently better adapted to than men. In our present-day congregations the good women do most of this work, whether we call them "deaconesses" or something else or nothing.

The strongest indication that there were deaconesses in the early church is the language of 1 Tim. 3: 11. Right in the midst of his instructions concerning deacons the apostle says: "Women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things." "Women!" What women? Why, those who are appointed to the diaconate. "In like manner"—the same as the men who are appointed. But we are reminded that the Authorized Version reads: "Even so must their wives, etc." But in the Greek there is simply the one word *gunaikos*,

which may mean either wives or women. To translate it "*their* wives," and thus make it apply to the wives of the deacons only, is a mistake, evidently. If it is rendered "wives in like manner," etc., it would then either apply to all Christian wives or to the wives of both the bishops and deacons. But it would seem contrary to all reason to suppose that the apostle would insert a general remark concerning Christian wives in the midst of his instructions concerning church officers, and it would seem strange that the apostle had omitted to say anything concerning the wives of the bishops both in this chapter and in his letter to Titus and yet require so much of a deacon's wife. Again, it would be rather awkward to place the qualifications of the wives of bishops and deacons right in the middle of the requirements of those who should be appointed to the diaconate. The Revised Version gives us the best translation, decidedly. "Women in like manner"—this might be understood to mean all Christian women, but the same reason for not making it apply to all wives would stand against that interpretation also. Why should the apostle throw in a general remark about women in his instructions about deacons?

If it is true that the churches had deaconesses in them, we would most naturally understand Phœbe to be a deaconess and not simply a servant. Indeed, the language concerning her seems to sustain the idea. She was a servant or deaconess of the *church* at Cenchrea, and not a serv-



ant of Paul or of the church at Rome in carrying the letter from him to them, as some have supposed. She had succored many, and that is the very work that deacons are appointed to do.

We need women now to do such service. Frequently women and girls who are to be baptized do not know how to prepare for the ordinance. Some mothers who seem to have more sentiment than judgment want their daughters to be dressed in white, which color is all right if the material is proper; but it is usually muslin or some other sort of filmy, clinging material. A good, sensible, motherly woman could be of great service in helping such persons prepare for baptism. Again, the greater number of cases of needy poor are among the widows and orphans; and when they are self-respecting and inclined to be proud, they would much more readily and with less embarrassment tell their needs to a good, kind, motherly woman than they would to a man. Furthermore, if a man manifests too great interest in such cases, the evil minds and long tongues of the community may seize the opportunity to damage the church. Let not your good be evil spoken of and do not give place to the devil. To pure-minded persons what is suggested may seem utterly unthinkable, but experience will teach them. "We are not ignorant of his [the devil's] devices."

Whether women are called "deaconesses" or "servants," and whether they are appointed or not appointed, there is much for them to do in the Lord's cause, and there is greater need for

women to be “teachers of that which is good” in the present day than ever before in the history of our country. O, how the young women of this age need to be taught the very things Paul tells the elderly women to teach! (Tit. 2: 3, 4.)

It is not necessary to say that the deacons were appointed in the same way that elders were. If we understand that Stephen and his six companions were appointed to the diaconate, we have an apostolic example of how the appointing was done. From Paul we learn that the deacons must first be proved and then appointed.

If there were deaconesses, we would suppose they were appointed in the same way. We see no reason for thinking they would not be so appointed. If the laying on of hands was for the purpose of imparting a spiritual gift, the women, no doubt, received the gifts also. There were women in the New Testament who had spiritual gifts, particularly the gift of prophecy.

It has been said that the fact that Paul said, “Let deacons be husbands of one wife,” shows that there were no women in the diaconate; but that is fallacious. The word that designates a deaconess is of different form and gender in the Greek as in the English. What is said, therefore, about a deacon would not always apply to a deaconess. No Jew ever had a husband, but that doesn’t mean that no Jewess ever had a husband. So the question cannot be settled by that point.

So far as any objection we have ever heard applies, there is no wrong in supposing that there

were deaconesses in the early church, though there is no definite proof for the claim.

However this may all be, we know the qualifications of a deacon and we know what his work is. We also know the importance of such work. Let not the disputed points hinder the work, therefore. Learn all you can and *do all you learn*, but leave that which is not clear to the Lord.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. When do we first read of deacons?
2. Do you think this order of servants was borrowed from the synagogue?
3. What are the qualifications of deacons?
4. What is the work of deacons?
5. If it is the duty of the deacons to look after the temporal affairs of the church, make a list of the things that they should attend to. Do your deacons do these things?
6. Can women scripturally do the things you have listed?
7. Name some things that women can do and should do.
8. Why can women care for the poor better than men can?
9. Can you name any women who are mentioned in the New Testament as faithful servants of God and worthy laborers in his cause? (See Acts 21: 9; Rom. 16: 1-7, 12, 15; Phil. 4: 2, 3.)
10. Debate: "Resolved, That the New Testament



churches had women appointed as deaconesses in their membership.”

AFFIRMATIVE.

NEGATIVE.

.....

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NOTE.—Let the teacher select four of the best-informed members of the class, whether men or boys, and let them discuss this question. It will quicken the interest of the whole class, and will cause the disputants to study the whole subject of the diaconate more diligently. Suggest that they should consult the Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, commentaries, etc., freely; but impress them with the fact that these are not infallible. They will see that also from the lack of agreement.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### Dealing with the Disorderly.

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It is impossible to enforce discipline in any congregation that is not scripturally organized; hence, until the lessons which we have tried to teach in the preceding chapters are learned and put into practice, it will do no good to know what the Bible teaches on the subject of discipline, unless, by seeing the importance of this subject, we seek to bring about such conditions in the congregation as will permit us to obey God in this matter also. If there were no other reasons for desiring to have the congregation organized after the New Testament pattern, the care of the erring would be sufficient. The Lord desires that his church be a pure church—without spot, wrinkle, blemish, or any such thing. He died that he might thus cleanse and sanctify his church, and he has given laws by which it may be kept pure. (Eph. 5: 20-30.) The church is the bride of Christ, espoused as a *chaste virgin* to Christ (2 Cor. 11: 2) ; and it is unthinkable that Christ will own his bride if she becomes unchaste, plays the harlot after the world, and has her affections taken away from Christ and set on things of the earth. And there is a danger that such a condition may take hold of either the individual Chris-

tian or the congregation. If a congregation permits impure individuals to remain unchastened within its fellowship, it thereby becomes a partaker of their sin and will soon so far fall out of the favor of the Lord that the candlestick will be removed. (Rev. 2: 5.) Paul says a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. (1 Cor. 5: 6.) He showed that the whole church at Corinth had already become guilty of the wicked man's sin. If there is an Achan in the camp, the Lord's cause will never prosper. This is why so many of our congregations have lost their influence, have ceased to grow, and never convert sinners. They may use much money in their work, but money is no substitute for righteousness. They may have the very best preachers that live to-day, and they may preach the gospel with eloquence, earnestness, and power, but with no results to speak of. What is the trouble? Why, the congregation is in the way. The same preaching in a new field would have converted fifty or a hundred times as many people. Is it right, then, for preachers to waste their time and energy on such churches? But shall we turn them over to the devil in a body? There are always many good people in every congregation. No; the better way is to put away the evil and save the body. Organize the congregation according to the Lord's word in order that they may keep free from such conditions.

There are three questions which we should like to consider in this chapter. They are:

1. *How can we prevent disorderly conduct on*



*the part of any member?* We should not forget that God's laws were given to men and not to angels—that is, the laws we have. The Lord knew our weaknesses, and has made all necessary provisions for them. The fact that God is holy and righteous himself should encourage us and not discourage us. True, he hates sin; but he loves the sinner. The reason he hates sin is that it has wrought ruin among men whom he loves. Yes, God loves the sinner; and the more like God we are in holiness, justice, and mercy, the greater will be our love and compassion for the erring. The good man deals with his erring brother in meekness, gentleness, and a kindly sympathy. It is the Pharisee—the self-righteous man, the hypocrite—who is exacting and censorious.

Because God loved us and knew our weaknesses he has, as said above, made provisions for us; and the reason so many of us fail is that we do not appreciate his provisions and appropriate the means of grace that he has given us. There would have been no need for the throne of intercession and the mediatorial reign of Christ if men were made perfect at conversion. Our boldness in approaching God comes from our trust in our High Priest and not from our own sufficiency. (Read Heb. 2: 10-18; 4: 14-16; 7: 26-28.) “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1: 9.) “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propi-

tiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” (1 John 2: 1, 2.) These things should encourage us and keep us from sinning; for, having this hope in ourselves, we purify ourselves even as he is pure. (1 John 3: 1-4.)

But if some of our members are not as faithful as they should be in following this teaching, or if they are inclined to be weak, how shall we prevent their becoming disorderly? By doing as God directs. He knew there would be such persons, and his arrangements included them. There is danger that the best of us will fall; hence we should take all precautions. “Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3: 12, 13.) “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.” (Heb. 10: 24, 25.) “Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.” (James 5: 16.)

Analyzing the above quotations, we learn that in order to keep from falling away from God—from being hardened by sin—(a) we should take heed, be watchful for ourselves and for each other. (b) We should exhort one another, and do

so daily. (c) We should consider one another, be thoughtful of, solicitous for one another, and provoke one another to love and good works. (d) We should not forsake our own assembling together, because by our communion, fellowship, and exhortations we strengthen and help one another. And this exhorting of each other should be the more diligently attended to as we see the day drawing nigh. It is unfortunate that this text has by some among us been so much used as a proof text that it has come to be regarded as nothing else, and has with those who thus misuse it lost all its force and beauty. While in all probability the assembling here referred to was their Lord's-day services, this text by no means proves that they assembled on the first day of the week. We must learn that from other scriptures. The teaching of this text is of mutual helpfulness—consider one another, provoke one another to love and good works, exhort one another, and neglect not your assembling together, that you may be helped by your association, exhortations, and prayers. The “day drawing nigh” did not mean the Lord's day. No Bible scholar worthy of the name ever took that position. (e) “Confess your sins one to another, and pray one for another.” We think this text is appropriate only when a backslider returns, but that is a mistake. We are all sinners; and if we do not admit it, we are self-deceived (1 John 1: 8-10); and we should not only confess to God, but to one another also. If we could often have meetings where nothing



but love and sympathy for one another exists and we would freely confess our sins, specifying the exact sin when possible, and tell our weak points and our struggles against evils of heart and life, and then pray together, we would all be better Christians. Why don't we do it? The Bible teaches us to do it.

The three thousand who obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost continued steadfastly in (a) the apostles' teaching, (b) in fellowship, (c) breaking of bread, and (d) prayers. (Acts 2: 42.) The way they continued in the apostles' teaching was, no doubt, to sit at their feet and hear them and learn the will of God. To-day we would continue in their teaching by reading the Bible, studying the New Testament daily. Of course we all know what the other three things mean. Then let us also continue steadfastly in these things. If we will do as these scriptures teach, we will not often, if ever, be troubled with disorderly members.

2. *What is it to walk disorderly?* We have already seen that we all sin, and we would now naturally inquire: What sin, or what nature of sin, would one have to commit in order to be considered disorderly? Are we all disorderly? It would be difficult to classify sin as regards guilt or degrees of guilt. In fact, it is doubtful whether or not man knows the demerits of any sin. He cannot know how God regards sin except as God has spoken on the subject. Men may speak of the exceeding sinfulness of certain sins and of the

comparative innocence of other sins; but their judgment may not be correct, and what they regard as minor offenses may be monstrous in the sight of God, and what men may consider heinous and unpardonable may not appear so to God. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah." (Isa. 55: 8.) Men look on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart. Some men who do very bad things are not bad men at heart; other men who have not broken through into outrageous acts are at heart presumptuous, rebellious, envious, covetous, and ready to do all sorts of little, mean, underhand, disguised deeds of evil.

In the nature of things, however, we can only deal with persons whose sins are overt. Any person who sins is in need of the encouragement and admonition of faithful Christians; but only the person who sins and is impenitent, defiant, and shows the purpose to continue his sins should be considered *disorderly*. It is more the disposition than the deed. It is not so much a question of what a person has done as it is of his attitude toward his wrong and toward those whose duty it is to correct him. True, the apostle Paul did name certain sins that the church must put away from its fellowship (1 Cor. 5: 11); but even persons guilty of these sins must be forgiven if they repent, as the history of the case at Corinth shows.

To answer the question, "Who is disorderly?" we would say that any person who persists in sin,

any sin, or who refuses to repent, or to be corrected, should be regarded as disorderly and should be dealt with as such.

3. *How should we deal with the disorderly?*

(a) We should pray for them. "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death." (1 John 5: 16.) (b) We should make an effort to convert them from their error. "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." (James 5: 19, 20.) (c) We should restore them if possible. "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal. 6: 1.) (d) We should admonish them. "And we exhort you, brethren, *admonish the disorderly*, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all." (1 Thess. 5: 14.) (e) We should withdraw from them, if they will not repent. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us." (2 Thess. 3: 6.) "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves." (1 Cor. 5: 13; read the whole chapter.)



As in all other efforts to obey God, there will be persons who object to following the instructions just quoted from Paul; but these lessons are too plain to be misunderstood and too important and too emphatic to be ignored. If the church is properly organized, as it must be before these directions can be followed, the elders will pay no heed to such puny and perverse objectors; for they are either too ignorant of God's word to have a voice in such serious affairs or they are actuated by some selfish, stubborn, or perverse desires; and that would, of course, disqualify them for any part in such matters. If people do not know what the Bible teaches, they must not criticize or otherwise hinder the elders who do know; and if they know, but will not obey, they are themselves disorderly and the Scriptures must be applied to them. Such persons will most likely quote scripture to justify themselves, but that makes their offense all the more flagrant. Almost all classes of sinners do that. The Bible never justifies wrong, and any man who tries to pervert scripture to excuse that which is obviously wrong is a blasphemer. Of course this does not apply to any sincere person who does not see the truth; but it does not take long to show sincere, honest souls what God teaches. Any person who will try to destroy the plain, unmistakable teaching of one passage of scripture by quoting another could hardly be considered honest. In view of the teaching of 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3: 6; Matt. 18: 15-19, what shall we say of a person who would refer to the parable

of the tares in an effort to prove that we should *not* “put away the wicked man from among” ourselves? Like all other efforts to make the Scriptures cross themselves, this effort is a failure, for the Scriptures will not cross. In explaining the parable of the tares, Jesus said that “the field is the world” (Matt. 13: 38), *not the church*; and Paul said that we had nothing to do with judging them that are without, and that we could not avoid having company with evil men of the world unless we go out of the world (1 Cor. 5: 9, 10, 12). No church should ever allow objectors to hinder it in clearing itself of evil.

The method of procedure in dealing with a disorderly member is given in Matt. 18: 15-19. Some may say that that passage refers only to personal offenses, but the same manner should be followed in dealing with any offense, as has been shown in this chapter. After all the admonitions, entreaties, tears, and prayers of the elders and other personal workers (of course the elders will require the assistance of any earnest Christian, especially any one who seems to have any influence with the erring brother. Let them see him personally and privately; for if the man is visited by a committee in a “professional” or “official” capacity, it looks as if he is “arraigned” and “held to answer,” and it will excite anger and arouse rebellion. He will begin to fight in defense. All this, however, is taken care of in the passage—Matt. 18: 18-20) have failed to bring the erring brother to repentance, then the matter

must be told to the church—brought before the whole congregation. There are many reasons why he should be tried (though it should not be considered a *trial*) before the whole church and not by the elders alone. It must be told to the *church* before action is or can be taken by the church. The expression, “if he will not hear the *church*,” shows that the church should appeal to him to repent. If the whole church does not know the brother’s offense, the efforts that were made to restore him, and, therefore, still considers him good enough for its fellowship, sympathy, and love, he would not be disfellowshipped by the church, no matter what the elders had done. Further, if the church does not know fully the merits and demerits of the case, it would make it easy for the wrongdoer to appeal for sympathy and claim that he had been unjustly treated. He would be sure to have sympathizers; hence there would be factions in the church, the brother would be encouraged in his wrongdoing, the elders would lose the respect of their members, and the whole purpose of discipline would be defeated. In fact, the elders ought to lose the respect of *all* the members if they should try to withdraw from a brother without first “telling it to the church.” Paul told the church at Corinth that, “*being gathered together*,” they should deliver the wicked person unto Satan. It must be told to the whole church in an assembled capacity—that is, the offense must be told that the church may then be



*heard* in an effort to gain the brother. Let us suppose a case:

In the congregation at Christianville a brother has sinned—walked disorderly. He has been admonished by the leading brethren of the church, singly, to repent. The elders have assured him of their love and of their earnest desire to see him saved—of their anxiety for his spiritual welfare. They have warned him against his course and begged him to repent. He stoutly refuses, and gives the brethren to understand that it is none of their concern. It is then announced to the congregation that there is a brother who has been guilty of sin, who has been earnestly and repeatedly admonished to repent, but who refuses, and that, therefore, the church is now requested to come together at a stated time to endeavor to bring the brother to repentance. The fact that it is the business of the whole church is stressed, and every member is urged to be present. The appointed hour has arrived, and the brethren and sisters are all there. One of the elders acts as chairman of the meeting and calls for a song. After the song, another elder reads appropriate scripture, and the whole assembly engages in prayer, led by the chairman. The brother who sinned is not present, though he was told of the meeting and asked to come. The chairman then tells the whole congregation who the offender is, what he has done, and what efforts have been made to bring him to repentance. He states that they should all earnestly pray for his redemption.

They all together kneel and pray for the erring brother. After the prayer, the chairman asks if any member can see any mistake that the elders have made in dealing with this case, or if any can suggest a further step that they should take for the man's restoration. Nothing is suggested. The chairman then suggests that, as the brother refused to come in order that the whole church might be heard, each member should see him personally if possible and make an effort to save him. Then another time for meeting to deal with the case is announced, and the audience is dismissed. They meet again at the time appointed, and engage in singing and prayer. Then all efforts are reported. None of them have availed. The chairman then asks if any one can give any reason why the disorderly person should not be disfellowshipped. No one can give any. Then it is simply, but gravely, announced that the brother is no longer a brother, but is now looked upon as unworthy of Christian friendship or fellowship.

Under another example we might suppose the disorderly brother present; but the same order would be followed, except that, if he did not acknowledge the sin he was charged with, the elders should be able to tell the church what evidence there was of his guilt.

In such a meeting there should be a very manifest spirit of seriousness, of earnestness, and of prayer. Any member should be allowed to speak in order that nothing be left unsaid and in the hope that some one might be able to reach the

brother's heart and save his soul. Great patience should be used in trying to show the man that his excuses do not justify his action, and he should be made to say whether he wishes publicly to renounce the Lord as he once publicly confessed him. If he says that he does, of course that would end the matter and place him outside the fellowship of the church. If he will not state that he so intends to treat the Lord, he should be shown that his conduct in refusing to hear the church is equal to a public renouncement; that if the church is forced to put him away, disfellowship him, or turn him out, their action will be recognized in heaven and his name will be taken out of the Lamb's book of life. (Matt. 18: 18, 19.)

If after all this is done in the proper spirit—no personal dislike for the brother allowed to enter the matter, no *sort* of personal animus in any way present—the sinner is still obstinate and impenitent, the elders should ask if anybody knows any reason why the man should not be “turned over to the devil.” If any reasons are offered in the right spirit, they should be considered, and those who offered them should be satisfied. If none are given, or after those given are disposed of, the elders should make it plain that the whole church acquiesces in the withdrawal, and that any criticism of the action would force them to also discipline the critics. Then the elders should announce, with becoming gravity, that Brother or Sister —— (calling the person by name) has, by persisting in sin, in rebellion to the church, by spurning the entreaties and prayers of the broth-



ers and sisters in the Lord, rendered himself or herself unfit for the society of Christian people, unsuitable for the fellowship of the church, and unworthy of the name of the Lord. And the Lord should be invoked to recognize the action.

After this solemn action, the disfellowshipped member should be allowed to pass out of the assembly without a single handshake or word of sympathy. Let no one in any way encourage him or indorse his conduct. That would defeat the whole purpose. When he is made to realize that he is disfellowshipped, that he is undeserving of sympathy and unworthy of Christian associations, he will repent; and that is the end to be sought in the whole procedure and what every Christian prays for.

This may look hard, but it is far better than to let the man be self-deceived and remain in sin till he must at last hear the same sentence pronounced by the Lord in the awful word "*depart.*" Then it will be too late; and we, if we have connived at his sin and become partakers of his guilt, will have to share his doom.

The Lord's way is best. Let us be faithful. "Let all that you do be done in love."

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. Is it right to allow sin to go unreproved in a congregation?
2. Who sins?
3. What should we do about our sins?
4. When should we confess our sins one to another?

5. On what condition does God forgive our sins?
6. Is there provision made for our sins?
7. Tell how we may keep ourselves and others from becoming disorderly.
8. What is it to walk disorderly?
9. What is a backslider?
10. Should a brother be considered a backslider because he has done wrong?
11. Should any man be called a "backslider" until he gives up trying to do right and says he publicly renounces the Lord?
12. If he says he does not intend to make any effort to serve the Lord, should his statement be publicly announced?
13. If any member is persistently disorderly, what should be done with him?
14. Tell how he should be put away.
15. After he has been withdrawn from, how should he be treated?
16. Suppose certain members take the part of the erring brother and criticize the action of the church, how should they be treated?
17. In what spirit should all this be done?
18. Should we let our sympathy influence us?
19. Who shows the greater love for a brother—the one who permits him to be self-deceived and continue in sin or the one who corrects him even when harsh measures are necessary?
20. What is the purpose or purposes of discipline?
21. Does your congregation follow God's word in this matter?

## CHAPTER IX.

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### Figuring on the Finances.

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It is impossible to carry on any sort of enterprise without money, and the church of God should be the most enterprising institution in any community. It takes money to do the work God has required of his church. If you know of any congregation that manages to run along without money, you may rest assured that it is doing nothing in the name of our King. If a church has only money enough to defray its own expenses—for song books, Bible-study helps, lights, fuel, the upkeep of the house, etc.—it cannot be considered as doing much for God. A congregation that does nothing but exist is not much of an honor to Christ, and it is no honor at all to be a member of such a church. The church is the pillar and support of the truth, the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. Every congregation should be a radiating center, and its light should shine in every direction and into far distant fields. But some man, willing to justify himself, may argue that our light shines through our conduct; by living a righteous life we have an influence for good. That is true, and all else is worthless without a righteous life; but a man whose work for God is limited to his personal acquaintances is not a very brilliant light. What honor is it to



Christ that a man behaves so as to keep out of the penitentiary? We owe that to ourselves. What have we done for Christ?

Christ commanded us—*you, all Christians*—to go into *all the world* and preach the gospel to *every creature*. How can we say that we have obeyed him if we spend three hundred and sixty-five days of the year working for ourselves, trying to build up a comfortable home for ourselves, trying to make money—if all our time and energies are spent in our own interest? Souls for whom Christ died are perishing, the cause of Christ is languishing at home, and the few missionaries that are on the foreign field are starving. Yet God's children are living in ease, in luxury, feasting and growing fat! We are not grieved over the "afflictions of Joseph;" we are singing idle songs, dancing, going to shows and theaters, and are deaf to the gospel word. Can we be saved in such a condition? How can we expect salvation?

We do not wish to be either caustic or pessimistic, and we don't want to make any invidious comparisons; but in the hope of provoking us to greater efforts we want to submit a few facts. Statistics show that small sectarian bodies give many times more money in the interest of their propaganda, have more missionaries in the field, than all the "loyal" churches of Christ. We will mention another thing that has come under our observation. In a certain town there is a Methodist Church and a church of Christ. The church

of Christ has a greater number of members, if we count only the adult members of the Methodist Church, and *more wealth*. The Methodist Church has a "pastor" to whom they pay \$2,400 per year. The church of Christ has a preacher whom they support by the hardest with a salary just exactly half that large. The Methodist Church has a missionary in China whom they support with \$1,000 per year. The church of Christ gives about \$50 or \$60 per year for missionary purposes! The Methodist Church gives more to "charity" or benevolent purposes than the church of Christ gives; it has a better meetinghouse, more conveniences for Bible study; and its members are more zealous in their work, more regular in their attendance at prayer meeting, Sunday school, and all their services than the members of the church of Christ, with one exception—they always go to church on Sunday morning, usually too late for the Bible study and song worship and the prayers, but in time for the Lord's Supper.

"Think not to say within yourselves, We have the truth on baptism and the Lord's Supper and the Methodists do not. Verily I say unto you, These things cannot save you."

This is not a pleasant comparison, and it is to be hoped that there are not many cases that it would fit; but it certainly is a matter of serious concern that we are not doing any more for Christ than we are.

The scriptural way to raise money for the Lord's work is, we presume, well known to all

who may read this chapter; and it is not necessary, therefore, to discuss the many methods that are used by men for this purpose, some of which are even questionable as to their morality. Our trouble does not come from a lack of information on this point; but it comes here, as it does in all other phases of the Lord's work, from a failure to do what God commands and as he directs. His way is always best.

Though we already know what the Bible teaches on this subject, we submit here an arrangement of the Lord's plan of raising money as given by Paul, and we suggest that this be put on a chart and placed before the congregation to study. It would be well for the elders to use it in teaching the members their duty in respect to giving. They should especially emphasize the lesson taught under the division, "PERSONAL." We can no more obey God for our sons or our daughters in the matter of giving than we can in baptism or the Lord's Supper. If they have no income, we should teach them to deny themselves some pleasures and give to the Lord a portion of that which we allow them for such things. But here is the chart:



## PAUL'S PLAN OF CHURCH FINANCE.

(1 Cor. 16: 2.)

P	ERIODIC "Upon the first day of the week	Worshipful Habitual Prayerful Cheerful
P	ERSONAL let each one of you	Each Man Each Woman Each Boy Each Girl No Proxies No Merging
P	ROVIDENT lay by him in store	Forehanded Deliberate Thoughtful Intelligent
P	ROPORTIONATE as he may prosper	Generous Careful Responsible Faithful
P	REVENTIVE that no collections be made when I come"	No Deficit No Interest on Loans No Worry No Retrenchment

If Paul's plan were followed in all our congregations, there would be no lack of funds for all our needs. In most places we do pretend to follow this plan, and often you find persons who are punctilious and scrupulous about "contributing on the first day of the week;" but they never do what that passage teaches. They overlook one chief point—viz., "*as he may prosper.*" They

think that if they go through the form of putting something into the collection basket they have obeyed God. Their income may be twenty-five dollars per week and their contributions ten cents, but that does not disturb their peaceful souls—they contribute every week just as the Bible teaches! Sometimes their income is more and the contribution less, or a smaller per cent; but that is a fair illustration of the way we sometimes obey ( ? ) God in the matter of giving.

We need to quicken our consciences on the duty of giving. We need to feel that we are disobedient when we fail to give as we may prosper just as much as we do when we fail to attend services or partake of the Lord's Supper.

*Our giving should be purposeful.* We have too much accidental giving. Whatever amount we happen to have about us when the collection is taken we give, provided the amount is not more than twenty-five or fifty cents; or the first small coin we get our hands on as the plate passes we drop in and feel that we have done what God requires. "These things ought not so to be." Paul said: "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9: 7.)

Every Christian should purpose in his heart to give so much to the Lord. But some one is ready with the objection that we do not know what our income will be. That is true with some, but it does not affect the lesson. We can purpose to give

a certain, definite per cent of our income, and then the amount of the income will determine the amount that we give. Such a purpose and such giving is more businesslike and shows more real faith and a true, conscientious desire to do the will of God. This loose, disjointed, purposeless giving is wrong. It is an excuse for the individual to shirk duty, and it is a handicap to the congregation. No church can ever do its full duty until it undertakes something—obligates itself to do something. Every church should obligate itself to support or help to support with a definite amount some work. But how can a church undertake anything like that unless there is some way of reckoning its resources? The elders should know something of the financial strength of the congregation. It would be easy if each member would willingly state what he purposes to do.

If all were conscientious in this duty as in others, there would not be so much trouble and negligence. But we are too prone to say that we will give as we prosper; and then if we have any sickness or other misfortune, we make the Lord pay the expense. Why not give a certain per cent of our income—not of our profit over and above our living, but of our income—our living; then if misfortune puts us behind with the Lord, do just as we do with our grocer—pay as we can? This would manifest an earnestness and an honesty in dealing with the Lord that he would in no wise despise.



Here is a good place to test our faith. It may be that we are not what we profess to be. The next time we grow real zealous and boast of our superior loyalty to the Lord and feel inclined to declare that we believe the Bible from cover to cover, let us get our New Testament and turn to 2 Cor. 9: 6-8 and read carefully, slowly, meditatively, and then ask ourselves if we believe that. Do we sow bountifully? Do we believe if we did we would be prospered? Do we believe that God is able to make all grace abound unto us?

But some one asks how much or what per cent of our income we should give. That depends on our faith in the Lord's promises. If we believe that the more bountifully we sow the more bountifully we will reap, we would naturally want to give a liberal per cent. It is a good investment. Under the law the Lord required his people to give one-tenth of all they made. The Jews obeyed God in this, and they were always prosperous. Some Christians give a tenth to the Lord, and they are more prosperous than those who do not give anything. It is easy if our will and purpose is to do that, but it is *awful* if it is against our will. The heart must be in it, otherwise it is worthless; and that is why God has not stipulated a definite amount for us to give and forced us by statutory commands to obey.

So the amount we give must be determined by our faith. Let us consider the amount we give as a measure of our faith in God's promises—that is, the per cent of what we have. Of course the amount in

dollars and cents cannot be taken as a measure, for some would give millions if they had them. But those who do not give of what they have would not give if they had billions; and if they did, it would not be acceptable; for they would give then not through faith in God, but because they had no dread of poverty, no fear of ever coming to want; they would most likely give in order to be praised by men.

The congregations are not awake to their possibilities. We do not know our strength, because we have never put it to the test. We could take the world if we would. Israel could have taken Canaan at first; but ten of their spies told them they could not, and because the people believed them and disbelieved God they died in the wilderness. Let us figure a little on the possibilities of a church. We will suppose that there are one hundred and fifty members in the congregation, with an average income of three hundred dollars per annum each. That is, of course, a very small amount, being twenty-five dollars per month to the individual; but there are always some members who have no income, while others will make from four to ten times this amount, and we want to be conservative; hence we will let three hundred dollars be an average. That does not mean that much profit above the living, but that much income. Now, if we multiply three hundred dollars by one hundred and fifty (the number of members), we will have the neat sum of forty-five thousand dollars. The Lord's children in a given

place make that much money in one year. But how much of that will they give to God? Let us suppose that they give one-tenth. The congregation would have *four thousand and five hundred dollars* with which to glorify God each year! That would support two preachers in the field and still leave enough to pay all the expenses of the congregation, allowing them a big expense account at that!

This is not visionary or impractical. It is a very conservative estimate. A congregation of only one hundred and fifty members is a small congregation, three hundred dollars is certainly a very small income, and one-tenth to the Lord is not unreasonable. But if we suppose that only one-twentieth is given to God, we would still have two thousand two hundred and fifty dollars to use in his service. How many congregations that size do anything like that much in a year? And what would be the possibilities of a church of three or five hundred members? Just figure it out on the same basis and see if we are using our strength. Let the reader apply these figures to his own congregation and see its possibilities. Let him show them to others and try to start a movement for better things. We are not weak; we are strong. The churches of Tennessee alone could support five hundred missionaries, if they would, and still do all they are now doing.

But some one may suggest that we have not the missionaries if we had the money. That is true at present. But if we would begin to show



more interest, to agitate the question more, to allow the great need to weigh upon our hearts more, and to pray the Lord of the harvest to send more laborers into his harvest, we would soon see a great awakening, and men would begin to prepare themselves for the work and to offer themselves for the fields. Our present state of lethargy would discourage any effort. When war is agitated and preparedness is preached, men volunteer as soldiers by the hundreds. Let us declare war on Satan and call for volunteers. They will come. Will we equip them?

Are we just playing at being Christians? Are we honest with God? We shall have to account to him for our stewardship, and he knows the purposes of our hearts and the motives that have prompted us in all things. Let us be faithful. In nearly all congregations there are a few members who do their whole duty in the matter of giving, as in other things; but the problem is to get *all* the members to do their duty. Self-respecting men who would not think of going with an excursion party or on a fishing expedition without bearing their part of the expenses will worship with a congregation, enjoy the preaching that others provide, and receive all the benefits of the congregation, and never feel that it is their duty to help pay expenses. This, however, is covered in Paul's plan, which we have already submitted. "*Let each one of you,*" said Paul, "lay by him in store upon the first day of the week, as he may prosper."

Let us try conscientiously to follow the Lord's word in this matter.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. How should the church raise the money that is needed to carry on its work?
2. Should all the funds of the church be collected in this way?
3. Should the church take special collections for special purposes?
4. Would this be necessary if Paul's plan were followed?
5. Should the need create the demand for the money, or should the money be ready when the need comes?
6. About how much should a church of ordinary size give to the Lord in a year?
7. Estimate the financial strength of your own congregation. Is it doing its duty?
8. What should be done with the money that is put into the treasury? Discuss this thoroughly.
9. Do you believe 2 Cor. 9: 6-8?
10. Then is not giving to God a pretty good investment?
11. Read all of 2 Cor. 8, 9, and 10.
12. What does Paul call *giving* in these chapters?
13. Is giving one of the Christian graces?
14. What other texts could you cite on this subject?

15. Is it right to support those who preach the gospel? Read carefully all of 1 Cor. 9; also Gal. 6: 6.

For the benefit of those who wish to make talks on this subject, we append the following outlines. If they do not care to use the outlines, they will at least find it convenient to have the scriptures collated.

### GIVING.

#### OUTLINE 1.

1. The fact of receiving blessing in our need involves the obligation to impart to others in their need. (Matt. 10: 8.)

2. All that we have we have received. (1 Chron. 29: 11, 12.) We are but stewards, holding in trust, for certain ends, the treasures bestowed upon us. (1 Pet. 4: 10; 1 Cor. 4: 7; 1 Chron. 29: 14-17.)

3. It is a divine command to give. (Matt. 5: 42; Luke 6: 38; 11: 41; 12: 33.)

4. We are to work in order that we may have to give. (Eph. 4: 28; Acts 20: 34, 35.)

5. We are to give—

(1) According to our means. (2 Cor. 8: 12; Acts 11: 29.)

(2) First providing for honest things. (2 Cor. 7: 21.)

(3) Cheerfully. (2 Cor. 9: 27.)

(4) Bountifully. (2 Cor. 9: 5-7.)

(5) Steadily. (1 Cor. 16: 1-3.)

(6) Unitedly. (2 Cor. 8: 13, 14; Acts 11: 29.)

(7) Not only for the poor, but for sending out the gospel, maintaining teachers in the church, and promoting every good work. (1 Cor. 9: 7-14; Phil. 4: 15-17; 3 John 5-8; 1 Tim. 5: 17, 18; Gal. 6: 6-10.)

6. Motives to this duty:

(1) Giving, it shall be given unto us. (Luke 6: 38.)

(2) The Lord will deliver us in the day of trouble. (Ps. 41: 1-3.)

(3) It makes us Godlike. (Luke 6: 35.)



- (4) It enlarges the heart and purges it of petty scruples and burdensome follies. (Luke 11: 41.)
- (5) It gives acceptance to our prayers. (Acts 10: 2, 4.)
- (6) It is a means of laying up treasure in heaven. (1 Tim. 6: 8, 19; Matt. 25: 34, 36.)
- (7) We shall reap as we have sown. (2 Cor. 9: 6; Gal. 6: 6-10.)

### GIVING.

#### OUTLINE 2.

*A Duty and a Privilege.*—A mark of true religion. (Ps. 112: 9; Isa. 32: 8; Eph. 4: 28; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19; 1 John 3: 17, 18.)

*Source.*—The grace of God. (2 Cor. 8: 1-25.) An echo of God's great love in Christ.

*Sphere.*—Unlimited. To all so far as we have the power. (Luke 6: 30; Gal. 6: 10.) To "them who are of the household of faith." (Rom. 12: 13.) To the poor. (Matt. 5: 42; Deut. 15: 11; Isa. 58: 7.) To strangers. (Lev. 25: 35.) To enemies. (Prov. 25: 21.) To services of God at home and abroad.

### GIVING.

#### OUTLINE 3.

*Manner.*—True liberality should be:

- (1) *Voluntary.* The freewill offering of a loving heart and an open hand. (Ex. 35: 21; Matt. 10: 8; 2 Cor. 8: 3-12.) "Not grudgingly, or of necessity." (2 Cor. 9: 7.)
- (2) *Bountiful.* Not sparingly. (Prov. 29: 9; 2 Cor. 8: 3; 9: 7; Mark 12: 43, 44; Acts 2: 45; 4: 36, 37.)
- (3) *Unostentatious.* (Matt. 6: 3; Rom. 12: 8.)
- (4) *Prompt.* (Prov. 24: 11, 12.)

*Measure.*—

- (1) According to ability. (Deut. 16: 10-17; Matt. 10: 8; 1 Cor. 16: 2.)
- (2) According to a fixed and settled principle. (1 Cor. 16: 2.) Not governed by caprice or emotion, much less to please a friend or make a display.

*Model.*—The blessed Lord. (2 Cor. 8: 9.) When Paul wishes to teach liberality, he refers to the Lord, who “gave himself.”

*Value and Importance.*—There are special blessings annexed to Christian liberality:

- (1) It is peculiarly pleasing to God. (2 Cor. 9: 17; Heb. 13: 16.)
- (2) It is a means of glorifying him, both in giver and receiver. (2 Cor. 9: 12, 13.)
- (3) Connected with rich promises. (Prov. 11: 25; 19: 17; 22: 9; 28: 27; Eccles. 11: 1, 2; Isa. 58: 6-11.)
- (4) The benedictions of Jesus upon it. (Acts 20: 35.)

## CHAPTER X.

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### Church Music.

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The music of the New Testament churches was very simple. The elaborate programs, the offertories, the operettas, the æsthetic art performances of modern churches are of comparative recent origin, and they came into the different denominations by degrees and, in most instances, over opposition. Of course the early disciples knew nothing of such things, and there is no authority for them in the New Testament if authority were sought.

In this chapter it is assumed that no one will deny that churches of the apostolic period used only vocal music; and as this is written for those who wish to follow apostolic example in work and worship, the question of the *kind* of music is not discussed. Probably "The Purpose and Power of Song in Our Services" would be a proper heading for this chapter.

We have contended strongly against the song service being made void or being made unscriptural by the introduction of instruments, and against choirs—hired choirs and others—usurping the privilege of the congregation by doing the singing and causing the audience—those who should be worshiping and praising God—to sit in



silence and be entertained; but it seems that we have not yet been able sufficiently to impress the majority of Christians with the importance of this part of the worship to get them to take any serious or sincere part in it. If singing is no part of the worship, our controversy against innovations is not only useless, but sinful; or if the singing is a nonessential part of the worship, it makes little difference who sings, what is sung, or whether with or without accompaniment. But if it is an essential part of the worship—and it most certainly is—how wrong it is for us to be indifferent about it or to use it as a mere convenience for people to enter the house and be seated by or call the house to order! And how sinful it is for *worshipers* (?) to read letters or carry on a conversation while this very sweet and solemn service is in progress! Yet every reader of this chapter has seen such things done. Why should one who has no more interest in or respect for such service object to any sort of innovation? And how can a congregation that does not teach against, warn against, and educate its members above such a perversion and prostitution of the song worship consistently object to innovations? It cannot do it. If we would have our service scriptural, we must enter into it with purpose and meaning, with concentrated thought and worshipful heart. To use God's name in song and not make the sentiment of the song our sentiment is to use God's name without meaning; hence, *to take it in vain*. To utter a prayer in song like,

“Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;” or, “My faith looks up to thee;” or, “In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me,” and not mean it—not utter it from our heart—is to sin grievously. It is mockery. O, how we need to be careful! And how we need teaching on this subject so that we will have such a condition in our worshiping assemblies as will aid us in getting our minds in proper frame, as will inspire reverence and awe!

All worshipers, whether Christian or heathen, in so far as they have music at all, make *vocal* music in their devotions. They may have instrumental music also, but they do not discard vocal music. On the question of *kinds of music*, we may set down vocal music as universally recognized and accepted; and we know, too, that it has the sanction of Holy Writ. But we must not forget that there are different kinds of vocal music. Singing should be classified not only according to the words uttered, but also according to the feelings that actuate the singer and the emotions they arouse in the hearers. There are spiritual songs and there are sensual songs, and then there is what might be termed a “middle class” of songs. These are songs that are not at all spiritual, but neither are they grossly sensual. They are light, meaningless jingles that make one want to “trip on light fantastic toe” or frisk about in harmony with the movement of the music. Such is the power of music that some melodies make you want to weep or pray, even if you do not know or understand a word of the song. Others

sound a note of joyful praise, and you feel like shouting, "Bless Jehovah, all ye hosts!" and "How excellent is thy name, O Lord, in all the earth!" And then there are tones of deep dignity, of solemn calm and reverential silence; and when you hear them, you feel like bowing your head and saying: "God is in his holy habitation; let all the earth keep silence before him."

God has not blessed man with any richer gift than the appreciation of music and the power to sing. No means of grace that is available to Christians is more potent than sweet songs. Nothing stirs the soul more deeply and nothing brings us nearer to God than the heart-searching sentiments of sacred songs and the sweet, soulful singing of a band of humble, yet joyful, worshipers whose very souls are ascending in unison to God on the vibrant strains of holy song.

Song worship should be the spontaneous outbursts of the feelings of adoration that fill the soul—the overflowings of a heart surcharged with devotion, reverence, and veneration. Hence the apostle Paul said, "Be filled with the Spirit;" and, as a result of that, *sing* and make "melody in your heart to the Lord." In harmony with the same thought James said: "Is any afflicted among you? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise." Christians should sing because they feel like singing, because it is the most satisfactory way of expressing the emotions or of giving utterance to the feelings that surge in the soul. When one is afflicted, one does not feel like sing-



ing. Prayer is more agreeable to the feelings then. When one is cheerful, singing is the natural outlet to the energies of the heart. In the cold, bleak days of winter, when the sky is overcast and a sullen gray shroud hangs over the earth, the song birds are never heard in the forest. They hide away under some friendly shelter and sit ruffled and shivering through the day. There is no music in their feelings, and hence none is heard from their throats. But when the warm spring comes, these little songsters make the woods vocal with their joy. Their feelings and their nature bid them sing, and they must sing.

So should we worship God in song. There is a great difference between the man who has something to say and the man who has to say something; also there is wide difference between the man who sings because his feelings prompt him to sing and the man who sings because he is paid to sing or because he wants people to hear his voice. But where the heart is not in a worshipful or a songful attitude when we enter the assembly of the saints, it should soon be made so by a concentration upon the sentiments of the hymn and by a hearty and enthusiastic participation in the singing. That is the purpose, or at least one purpose, of the singing—to make melody with the heart or to make the heart full of melody and joyous emotions. Thus the minds of the entire congregation are unified. As Christians assemble, they come from many different

homes, with many different thoughts and feelings in their bosoms. Personal affairs, domestic cares, and business interests occupy the thoughts of some, while others have just laid down the Sunday newspaper and their minds are still upon the affairs of the world. But there is one purpose that has brought them all together—viz., to worship God. And when the worship begins, every one should be in his place ready to join in the first note of the first song. Then, all singing together, their minds quickly run together, and their united praise ascends to God as from one man. The thoughts of other things are crowded out, and feelings of adoration and worship fill the soul, and the man is enabled to worship God in spirit and in truth, which is the only sort of worship he will accept. The heart is then made mellow and full of melody, and the worshiper is prepared for all the other acts of worship.

But the unfortunate attitude that most church members of to-day hold toward the singing makes such sweet and soulful singing impossible. They do not regard it as a part of the worship, and they do not feel called upon to be present for the singing; or if they are present, they do not sing, and some do not think it necessary to be specially attentive while the others are singing. In most places the song worship cannot be what it should be, because the worshipers (?) are constantly coming in, hunting seats, and saluting their neighbors while the saints are hymning the praises of their Maker and are endeavoring to “make mel-

ody with their hearts to the Lord." While some are thus making melody with their hearts, others are making a din with their feet, a disturbance with their bodies, and a discord with their tongues. Yet those who thus ignore that part of the solemn worship for themselves and ruin it for the others would be the first to object and the last to yield the objection if some one should wish to bring in musical instruments to use with the singing. This is so inconsistent, and even so absurd, that we cannot well censure those favoring the instrument for disrespecting their objection. If you are never present during the song worship, what right have you to say how it should be conducted or what should be used in connection with it; or what consistency is there in your objection to instrumental accompaniment when you accompany the singing with boisterous talking as you approach the door and by a noisy promenade down the aisle? This is a thing too frequently done; and—O!—if we could make every one see just how ugly it is! Such conduct is boorish if not blasphemous. Such a thing should never be thought of among polite, refined people, to say nothing of those who should be worshipers and should at that very instant be engaged in the worship, or, if for any reason they are not in it, they should by all means feel a keen sense of their loss and get into it with all speed.

In the hope of making Christians see the need of making the song worship what it should be, let us ask a few vital questions, and we trust every



reader will seriously consider them and answer them to his own conscience: Is there any meaning in the singing? If not, why not do away with it altogether? Is it any part of the worship? If it is, should not every Christian try conscientiously to have part in it? Is singing an act of faith? If not, is it not sinful to practice it? (Rom. 14: 23.) If it is an act performed in faith toward God, how dare any Christian to neglect it or disregard it? If we should delay the Lord's Supper, the sermon, or any other part of the worship while "tarrying one for another," should we not delay the song worship also? If not, why not? If we should carry the emblems to those who enter the assembly after they were passed to the audience, why should we not repeat the song or songs that were sung before they entered also? Was there anything in the songs for worshipers? If not, why were they sung? If there was, did not those who came late miss something?

While the thought of tardy worshipers is before us, let us consider another serious question: When is the most appropriate time to enter a worshiping assembly? It seems to be universally understood that it would be inappropriate to enter during prayer. That would show a lack of reverence; and, on account of our custom, it would show a lack of culture and training, though it may be seriously doubted whether that would show any more lack of reverence than to enter while the Scriptures are being read. Which is the more important—what we say to God or what

God says to us? No person with any depths of feeling or any degree of reverence would want to enter while the Lord's Supper is being celebrated. Then, to repeat the question, when is a good time to enter? While the singing is in progress! Ah, yes, that's the time! Come on in, and take your time about finding a seat. Go up and down the aisles till you find the place you want, and then crowd in past four or five persons and sit down. Then get up again and take off your wraps, and turn around and throw them across the back of the seat and sit down. Now adjust those things on the back of the seat again. Look about over the audience to see who is there. Now emit a loud sigh to indicate that you are about to get settled. Now turn to the one sitting next to you and ask him how many songs "they" (ignore the fact that he is one of the singers) have sung. Tell him all about what made you late. O, you had such a time! Tell him all about it. He is just singing "Nearer, my God, to thee," or "My faith looks up to thee, thou Lamb of Calvary," or "If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now;" and, of course, he would be glad to hear all you have to say.

If you do not think that would be proper, then answer the question: When is an appropriate time to enter an assembly of worshipers? There can be but one correct answer: *Before the worship begins*. Of course it is *permissible* to enter later, but it is not—never is—*proper*. It is something to be overlooked and excused by those whose

worship you disturb, and hence something to be regretted by you. When a person who is late to worship tells of some mishap or of some extraordinary occurrence that has caused his tardiness, and says he thinks he ought to be excused, there is, of course, an admission that the tardiness was improper, else why think of being excused? What is there to be excused for? There are times when tardiness is unavoidable, but there is never a time when it is not to be regretted by those guilty.

If we could get this lesson taught and learned, we would have removed one great handicap to our worship.

We need reverence. There is no surer indication of a well-bred character than reverence—reverence for everything sacred. A lack of reverence not only shows a lack of culture, but it also shows an absence of the finer feelings that go into the delicate construction of a gentle and refined soul. It proclaims one of coarse breed, of common stock, and lacking in the essential qualities of the finest character.

Boisterousness is a well-recognized characteristic of coarseness. It is a negro characteristic. Surely there is no need to speak against such a thing among Christians.

There are two passages of scripture that should be printed on placards and placed in every school-house and church house in the country, and the preachers and teachers should frequently call attention to them, illustrate their lessons, and point



their morals. They are the following: "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with *reverence and awe*: for our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12: 28.) "But we exhort you, brethren, . . . *that ye study to be quiet*, and to do your own business." (1 Thess. 4: 10, 11.)

The lessons just given may appear to be foreign to the subject of this chapter, and in theory they are, but in fact they are not. Boisterousness, tardiness, and irreverence have done a great deal toward ruining the song worship of many congregations. Now let us suppose that we have a band of brethren who have all heeded these lessons and the first day of the week—the day for worship—has dawned. Eleven o'clock in the forenoon is the hour for worship to begin. When that time arrives, the Christians are *all* in the house, in their seats, and are *quiet*, reading a hymn or the Bible, meditating, not talking and laughing—*quiet*. (1 Thess. 4: 10.) Then the song leader arises and announces a hymn. The congregation, being already in a meditative, worshipful frame of mind, takes up the tune as the leader starts and sings with the spirit (the *spirit* of each singer is in the worship; hence he worships in the *spirit*) and with the understanding—he understands what the hymn says, understands the words he utters, and speaks them fervently to the glory and praise of God and to the edification of his fellow worshipers.

What else is there now to learn about acceptable song worship, and what more is to be desired in the way of church music?

But we may sum up all the New Testament says about church music in a few words, and we believe then each reader will see that the above meets all the requirements. Let us first read the passages:

“And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.” (Eph. 5: 18, 19.)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God.” (Col. 3: 16, 17.)

“I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Cor. 14: 15.)

“Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of *praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of *lips* which make confession to his name.” (Heb. 13: 15.)

We may say now that—

1. It is the privilege, if not the duty, of each worshiper to sing.

2. That the songs must be spiritual songs.

3. That the singing must be such as will teach, edify, admonish all the worshipers.

4. That singing must be done with the *spirit*, with *grace* in the heart, and must make *melody in the heart to the Lord*.

It is no violation of anything in the New Testament—rather, it is sanctioned by it—for one man to sing to the audience if he can thereby edify and admonish the audience. Nor is it wrong for two persons, four persons, or six persons together to stand before the assembly and admonish them with a song or speak to them through a hymn—provided always, of course, that the singers are themselves worshipers and that they are singing for the scriptural purpose, and provided, also, that they do not do all the singing and thereby take away the right and privilege that belongs to every Christian—to praise God in song.

But some one suggests that some persons cannot sing. In reply, we say that they ought to learn to sing. Some people cannot read the Bible, but we insist that they ought to learn to read. It is further objected that some can never learn to sing. We cannot say whether that is true or not; but in a case of that kind we would suggest that the person get the hymn book, follow the words as the others sing, and try to make melody with his heart to the Lord. At least there is no excuse for his being inattentive.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. What sort of music did the New Testament churches have?



2. Can you quote all the New Testament says on the question of music?
3. When were instruments of music first used by professed Christians in connection with their worship? Answer: Not before the sixth or seventh century. (See encyclopedia.)
4. What is the purpose of singing?
5. What kind of songs should be sung?
6. Who should do the singing?
7. What feelings should fill the heart of the singers?
8. If the song should fail to arouse or inspire such feelings, is the singing scriptural? Will God accept the worship?
9. What should persons who cannot sing do during the song worship?
10. What is one great hindrance to song worship in our churches?
11. Quote Heb. 12: 28; 1 Thess. 4: 10, 11.
12. When is the best time to enter a worshipping assembly?
13. Is not habitual tardiness a sin?
14. Is it in harmony with the divine command to do all things "decently and in order?" (1 Cor. 14: 40.)
15. Each elder of the church is to be "orderly;" and should they not see that the services are orderly, therefore? Why else does God require elders to be orderly?

16. Give a description of an ideal condition at the hour of worship and during the hour of worship.
17. Does your congregation fit the description? Would it if every member were like you?
18. If your home church does not come up to the ideal, who is at fault? If you are, correct your fault; if others are, help them to do better. Hold up the ideal.

## CHAPTER XI.

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### A Model Church.

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In considering a model church, we must, of course, have some standard by which to measure a church—some ideal to which we can appeal. In the minds of some modern religious teachers no church would be a model church till it added to its services all the paraphernalia of the theater and some of the adjuncts of the barroom. Connected with the house of worship there must be a gymnasium and a culinary department, and possibly a pool room and a swimming pool. But with such things we have nothing to do. We have a standard, a criterion, and to it we appeal. It is the Lord we wish to please, and not man. The fads and fancies of men change with the seasons, and what is popular in this generation will be entirely out of date in the next generation. A true Christian cares nothing for popularity. To have the favor of men of the world in matters religious is a certain sign that we do not have the favor of Christ. (Gal. 1: 7-10.) But in striving to please Christ we must know his wish or will in everything, and we find that in the Bible—the New Testament. He is the Founder of the church (Matt. 16: 18, 19), the Head of the church (Eph. 1: 23; Col. 1: 18). He is the Mediator of



the new covenant—new laws, new will, or testament. (Heb. 9: 15, 16; 12: 24.) After his death and resurrection and coronation as “Lord and Christ,” he sent the Holy Spirit to completely reveal his will and to declare all his plans, to execute his laws, and to set his church in operation. (See John 14: 26; 16: 13, 14; Luke 24: 46-49; Acts 1: 8.)

Shall we assume, then, that the Founder built such a church as would please him, that the Law-giver inaugurated such a government as he desired, and that the Head directed such work and worship as he approved, as would honor him? Can weak, mortal, frail, fallible, feeble man know what would please the Lord better than the Lord knew himself? Who honors the Lord most—the man who humbly submits to what the Lord says, even though he (the man) does not see the need of the thing done, or the man who ignores the Lord’s directions, disrespects his authority and commands, and does according to his (the man’s) ideas and according to popular sentiment? To ask such a question is to answer it.

Let us say, therefore, that a model church, or congregation (for we are discussing the local church chiefly), is one that measures up to the New Testament pattern in organization, in work, and in worship. Considering these items in order, we shall discuss—

1. *Organization*.—From the preceding chapters we have learned that there is no organization in the church of God except a local church or con-

gregation; that there is no officer in the church that has jurisdiction or authority over a diocese, with its subordinate officers; that there can be no corporation of congregations, but that each congregation is strictly autonomous—an independent body. Each congregation is a complete mechanism, considered under another figure, and is fully equipped to do all the work the Lord has ordained. A model church will have a plurality of scriptural bishops—not fewer than four and preferably six or eight. The number will depend somewhat upon the size of the congregation, but more especially upon the number of men in it who are qualified for the office. All these bishops will be scripturally qualified, each one possessing all the qualifications, and scripturally appointed. They will be found prayerfully performing their functions. They will have a complete register of their members and will know the spiritual condition of them all. These elders will hold regular business sessions or conferences at least once a month, and oftener if the work demands it. There will be perfect understanding among them as to what the church is doing and what it plans to do. They will call the whole church together every sixty or ninety days and report to them what has been done, what is being done, and what plans for work are made. This will inspire confidence, stimulate a feeling of fellowship and partnership in the work, and stir up much interest. The elders will, in such meetings, invite suggestions from the members, welcome criticism, and

allow full and free discussion on all questions pertaining to the welfare of the church. Thus there will be always perfect understanding and good feeling in the congregation.

To assist the elders, the model church will have a board of deacons. The number will be determined by the size of the congregation. These, like the elders, must possess the Pauline qualifications and must be scripturally appointed for their work. They will be busily engaged in looking after the temporal affairs of the church. They will know of the needy poor in the congregation and will relieve their needs. This will be a great work; and when diligently performed, it will "purchase to the deacons a good degree."

In the model church the members will all be in subjection to the overseers, or elders. They will trust their judgment and abide by their decision in all matters of order and discipline, with the understanding, of course, that every Christian reads the word of God for himself and that any violation of Scripture by an elder may be pointed out by the humblest member. This should be done privately and in the spirit of meekness and fear. The elders will welcome such correction. The members will have a voice in all the affairs of the church when no principle of right or wrong is involved. With such conditions prevailing, the congregation will, without question, be scripturally organized.

2. *Work.*—The model church will be a working church. Every member will be a worker. Each



one will be so busy doing his part of the work that he will not have time to find fault with the others. No member will be heard to speak of the church as "they" and of its work as what "they" do or do not do. Each member is a unit of strength, an integral part of the whole, and feels his responsibility for the success or failure of the congregation. Each one does what he is directed to do, and finds work and does it on his own initiative. No one wants to be petted and humored, but each desires to minister instead of being ministered to. Even those who have to have the help of the church will accept it reluctantly and gratefully, and not as that which the church owes them and which they expected and idly waited for. Such help, in a model church, will never be given grudgingly or in a spirit of condescension, as "*charity.*"

In the model church there will be definite plans for work—a certain task undertaken which will call out the whole strength of the body, which will utilize all the forces of the congregation. There will be a program for each year, involving an outlay of money—so much for an evangelistic campaign at home; so much for missionary efforts in near-by fields; so much for foreign missions; enough to do good to all men as the opportunities come; so much for Bible study—equipping the classrooms and supplying books, charts, maps, etc.; so much for books and song drills. These things will all be so provided and so managed as to engage the attention of the young and

keep them away from worldliness and sin. Their hearts cannot get full of evil if they are kept full of good. In a model church the children will not graduate from the Bible school when they reach the "upper teens;" but little and large, young and old alike will attend the classes, prepare their lessons, and manifest real interest in God's word and in the condition of his cause among men.

There will be no faultfinding members in the model church, but each member will esteem others better than himself; they will in honor prefer one another; they will all be members one of another; they will bear one another's burdens; they will weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. There will be no schism in the body, but love will be without hypocrisy among them. Thus working together, they will also be coworkers with God, and such a church will not be barren of good fruits—nay, it will be a city set on a hill, and no power can hide it from the world's view.

3. *Worship*.—A model church is necessarily a converted church. Its members have "put off the old man." They are in Christ, and are, therefore, new creatures. Their affections are on spiritual things—things above—and not on fleshly, worldly, sensual things; and, of course, therefore, they enjoy spiritual food, spiritual songs, spiritual surroundings, more than Sunday dinners, Sunday newspapers, Sunday baseball, or Sunday picture shows; for all such things are connected with

sensual practices even if they are not sensual *per se*.

Worship is a natural expression of a consecrated soul. He who does not enjoy things spiritual is carnal-minded; hence, is in a state of death, is not a Christian, and cannot be saved unless he repents and is converted.

When the members of a model church assemble, they come into the worship with reverence. They come with one purpose, with one mind—their minds are all together on one thought. They come with devout hearts. They are all there when the worship begins, and they all always take part. They all *worship*. They all participate in the singing. Those who cannot sing follow the words of the hymn (for, of course, a model church will have hymn books enough for every person present), and listen to the melody, and try to worship with grace in their hearts. All the members engage in the prayers and say “Amen” at the close, either audibly or in the heart. The worship is always orderly, systematic, and solemn. There is no confusion, no distractions, and no unseemly commotions; for there are no idle minds present. Every one is worshiping; every one is full of God. God is in the midst, and all are filled with awe. There is an atmosphere of calm, of quiet, of peace and reverence; for we are now living in the age “when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers. God



is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4: 23, 24.)

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION.

1. In what way are we to decide whether a church is a model church?
2. By what are we to measure the church?
3. How many kinds of church organizations are mentioned or authorized in the Bible?
4. When is a congregation organized according to New Testament teaching?
5. What is some of the work a model church must do?
6. Who should do this work?
7. Who is responsible for the success or failure of a congregation?
8. Will you have to answer to God for the condition of your congregation?
9. What is worship?
10. Can we call acts performed in the name of God worship if the heart is not in them?
11. Can we sing and pray and still not worship?
12. In a model congregation, how many of the members worship?
13. What part or parts of the worship do they all participate in?
14. How many of them should be there when the worship begins?
15. Is habitual tardiness a sin?
16. Then should not the one guilty be admonished?
17. Give a description of a model church.

18. In the last paragraph under the division "*Work*" of this chapter there are ten allusions to scripture, or ten scriptural expressions without quotation marks and without the references. Can you find the expressions? Can you find the passages alluded to?
19. In the first three sentences of the first paragraph under "*Worship*" there are three scripture expressions. Can you find the passages from which these expressions are taken?
20. Did you read all the references given in this chapter?

## CHAPTER XII.

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### Prayer-Meeting Topics.

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#### Some Reasons Why Church Members Should Always Attend the Prayer Meetings.

1. All reasons why one should attend the preaching of the word apply here.
2. The example of the apostles: Acts 1: 13, 14; Acts 2: 1.
3. The example of the early Christians: Acts 2: 42; Acts 12: 5.
4. Shall the practice of the Jews shame Christians? See Acts 16: 13; Ps. 116: 18, 19; Joel 2: 15-18.
5. United prayer was a duty: Joel 1: 14; Luke 1: 10; also Ps. 34: 3.
6. There are special promises to united prayer: Matt. 18: 19, 20.
7. We are social beings; an isolated Christian life is not adapted to our requirements: See Ps. 142: 4; Mal. 3: 16; Heb. 3: 12-14; Heb. 10: 25.
8. We must *strive* to enter heaven, and we cannot, therefore, neglect such a potent means of grace: Luke 13: 24.
9. One stick will not burn alone; put the scattered fuel together if you want a blaze; the more the fuel, the hotter the fire: Prov. 27: 17.



To aid the elders in getting the young men to take part in the prayer meeting, the following topics are submitted. Let one of the older men take the lead each week, and let him assign the different divisions to young men. If they do no more than read the references at first, it will be a start; but they should be encouraged to comment also.

## PRAYER.

*Prayer Enjoined*—Luke 18: 1-4; Matt. 6: 5-15; 7: 7-12; John 16: 23, 24; Matt. 18: 19, 20.

*Prayer Encouraged*—Deut. 4: 29-31; 2 Chron. 7: 13, 14; Ps. 50: 15; Isa. 65: 24; Luke 11: 9-13; 1 John 5: 14, 15; Heb. 4: 16; 1 John 3: 20-22.

*Prayer Requested*—Rom. 15: 30-32; Eph. 6: 18-20; Col. 4: 2-4; Heb. 13: 18-21; 2 Thess. 3: 1, 2; 2 Cor. 1: 11; 1 Thess. 5: 25.

*Prayer Offered*—Acts 20: 32; Phil. 1: 2-11; Col. 1: 9-14; 1 Thess. 3: 9-13; 2 Thess. 1: 11, 12.

## PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

Subject: "How to Become a Christian, and Why Wear That Name."

*Hear*—John 17: 20, 21; Rom. 10: 17; John 6: 44-46; Acts 15: 7.

*Believe*—Mark 16: 16; John 1: 12; 3: 14-18, 36; 5: 24; 6: 29; 8: 21-24; Gal. 3: 26; Heb. 11: 6, 7.

*Repent*—Matt. 9: 13; Mark 6: 12; Luke 13: 1-7; 24: 47; Acts 2: 38; 3: 19; 17: 30; 20: 21; 26: 20.

*Confess*—Matt. 10: 32; Acts 8: 37; Rom. 10: 9, 10; Phil. 2: 9-11; 1 John 4: 15.

*Be Baptized*—Matt. 28: 19, 20; Mark 16: 15, 16; John 3: 5; Luke 7: 30; Acts 2: 38; 8: 36-38; 10: 46-48; 22: 16; Rom. 6: 3-6; Gal. 3: 27; Eph. 5: 26; Col. 2: 12; 1 Pet. 3: 18-21.

#### THE NAME.

*Value of a Name*—Lev. 18: 21; 2 Sam. 7: 23; Prov. 18: 20; 22: 1; Eccles. 7: 1.

*A New Name, God-Given*—Isa. 56: 5; 62: 2; Acts 11: 26; 26: 28.

*The Name of Jesus*—Acts 2: 38; 3: 6-8; 4: 12-30; 5: 28; 15: 26; Eph. 1: 21; Phil. 2: 9, 10; Col. 3: 17; 2 Tim. 2: 19; 1 Pet. 4: 14; James 2: 7.

#### PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

Subject: "God's Ownership of Us—We Belong to God."

*By Creation*—Isa. 43: 7; Col. 1: 16; Rev. 4: 11.

*By Providence*—Deut. 8: 3-18; Ps. 36: 6; 115: 16; 136: 25; 145: 15, 16; Eccles. 5: 19.

*By Redemption*—Ps. 107: 2; Isa. 43: 1; Acts 20: 28; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19; 1 Cor. 6: 29; Rev. 5: 9.

*For Service*—Acts 27: 23; 1 Cor. 7: 23; Eph. 2: 10; Tit. 2: 14; 2 Tim. 2: 21.

#### PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

Subject: "Daniel, or Devotion to Principle—Daniel's Character Analyzed."

*Resolute*—Dan. 1: 8; Heb. 10: 23.

*Abstinent*—Dan. 1: 8; 1 Thess. 5: 22; 1 Pet. 2: 11.

*Prayerful*—Dan. 2: 17, 18; Phil. 4: 6.

*Thankful*—Dan. 2: 23; 1 Thess. 5: 18.

*Faithful*—Dan. 4: 27; Acts 20: 27.

*Loyal*—Dan. 6: 10; Rev. 2: 10.

*Humble*—Dan. 9: 3, 7, 9; 2 Cor. 3: 5.

#### PRAYER-MEETING TOPIC.

Subject: "Christian Union, and How to Hasten It."

*The Sin of Division*—Rom. 16: 17; 1 Cor. 1: 10-13; 1 Cor. 3: 3; 1 Cor. 11: 17, 18; 1 Cor. 12: 13, 24, 25; Gal. 5: 19-21; James 3: 14.

#### UNITY.

*The Ideal*—John 17: 21-26; Rom. 12: 5; 1 Cor. 10: 16, 17; 1 Cor. 12: 12, 13, 27; Eph. 5: 30-32; Ps. 133: 1.

*How to Attain It*—Rom. 12: 16; Rom. 14: 19; Rom. 15: 5, 6; 1 Cor. 1: 10; 2 Cor. 13: 11; Eph. 4: 1-4; Phil. 1: 27; Phil. 2: 2-6; Phil. 3: 16, 17; 1 Pet. 3: 8.

#### LESSONS FROM NAAMAN.

*Leprosy a Type of Sin*—2 Kings 5: 1; Lev. 13: 1-17; Num. 5: 1-3.

*Human Power Helpless to Remedy*—2 Kings 5: 6, 7; Rom. 7: 18-24.

*Human Pride Keeps Men from Pardon*—2 Kings 5: 11, 12; 1 Cor. 1: 18, 21, 23; 1 Cor. 2: 6-8.



*God's Way of Pardon is Simple*—2 Kings 5: 10;  
Acts 2: 38; Acts 8: 35-39; Rom. 6: 17.

*Cleansing Comes by Obedience*—2 Kings 5: 14;  
Rom. 6: 17; 2 Thess. 1: 9, 10; 1 Pet. 1: 22;  
4: 16, 17.

*The Gifts of God Cannot Be Bought*—2 Kings 5:  
15, 16; Acts 8: 20; Isa. 55: 1, 2; Eph. 2:  
8-10.









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